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LUTHER'S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION ACCORDING
TO THE HOLL-WALTHER CONTROVERSY

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
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by

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CHAPTER I

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The articulus iustificationis is the center and core of the religious Reformation of the 16th century. It constitutes the fundamental Reformation insight, for it embodies and projects a new concept of God and a new relationship between God and man.

For the young monk Luther, God was the supremely righteous, moral Being who exercises His grace and righteousness in recognizing and rewarding human good and lashing out at human evil. Luther sought to find this gracious God by exhausting all the known avenues of approach to Him. But no sacramental infusion of grace or mystic absorption into the deity or subtle theologizing or intense self-disciplinary zeal could give him the assurance that a gracious God recognized his goodness; for behind all his holy attempts he saw his fundamental inability to love God with all his might, to love the God who holds men accountable to the law which they cannot possibly fulfill and damns them because they cannot. Yet by way of studying Romans 1:17 Luther found the gracious God. But this was not the God whose righteousness is to punish sinners and thus to vindicate His justice. The righteousness of God he now saw as that action by which God comes into contact with men, forgives them their sin, and places them into a new relationship with Him. Luther called this a

iustitia passiva, and understood the Dei in iustitia Dei as a genitive of authorship rather than of possession.¹

But just what did the concept of justification mean to Luther after his discovery of the meaning of Romans 1:17? Was it the act by which God primarily forgives sins, or primarily the act by which He makes man a new creature? Precisely what is the relationship between forgiveness and the new life in the thinking of Luther? And on what grounds can the holy God enter into a relationship with sinful men? It is around these three questions that a vigorous controversy has arisen during the twentieth century. Karl Hölzl, the pioneer Luther scholar of this century, developed an interpretation of Luther's doctrine of justification which

¹Adolf Hamel, Der Junge Luther und Augustin (Gütersloh: Verlag C. Bertelsmann, 1935), II, 5, n. 1, where source is given (Tischreden of 1538). "Illud vocabulum iustitia Dei est in meynom hertzen ein donnerschlag gewest, nam quando in papatu legeron: 'In iustitia tua libera me, in veritate tua,' (Ps. 30, 2), mox putabam illam iustitiam vindicantem, furorem scilicet divinae irae. Ich war dem Paulo von hertzen feindt, ubi legobam: 'revelatur iustitia Dei per evangelium.' (Rom. 1, 17) Sed postea cum consequentia viderem scilicet sicut scriptum est: 'Justus ex fide sua vivit' et insuper Augustinum consulere, da wardt ich frolich. Ubi iustitia Dei misericordiam iustos reputantem cognovi, ibi afflicto remedium contigit." In Luther's preface to the complete edition of his works published in 1545 Luther tells of the difficulties he had with the concept iustitia Dei in Rom. 1:17, but "ibi iustitiam coepi intelligere eam, qua iustus dono Dei vivit, nempe ex fide esse hanc sententiam, revelari per evangelium iustitiam Dei, scilicet passivam, qua nos Deus misericors iustificat per fidem, sicut scriptum est: 'Justus ex fide vivit.'" Quoted in ibid., p. 9. See also Werner Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931), I, 65-6, 68. For the analysis of Luther's condition before his discovery of the Reformation insight, see Watson, Let God Be God! (Muhlenberg Press: Philadelphia, 1949), pp. 15-27.

differed radically from the traditional view and which opposed itself particularly to Melancthon's systematization of Luther's doctrine. Wilhelm Walther, another eminent Lutheran theologian, was the first to subject Holl's reinterpretation to a thoroughgoing criticism. There ensued a sharp exchange of essays which have become renowned in the theological world and have provided the basis for much discussion. This controversy concerning Luther's doctrine of justification has most profound implications for the religious foundation of all evangelical Christianity.

In the following chapters the course of this controversy will be traced, an investigation of certain critical quotations from Luther will be carried out, and some definite conclusions as to the chief areas of disagreement will be reached. In order to achieve the proper historical perspective, we shall trace in this first chapter the development of the doctrine of justification in the sixteenth century as set forth by Luther, Melancthon, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Osiander, and the Formula of Concord.

Since Luther's doctrine of justification will be treated at considerable length in the following chapters, we shall have to content ourselves here with the brief summary of Köberle.² Luther's chief emphasis was that God accounts man righteous. But he was also influenced by Augustine and the

²Adolf Köberle, The Quest for Holiness (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1938), Excursus, p. 93.

mystics, who emphasized the effective aspects of grace. Luther always places the strictly imputative character of justification into close relationship with the progressive renewal of life, but forgiveness ranks above the renewal.

Three stages may be traced in Luther's development. In the early period he interchanges reputari with effici and even speaks of a magis et magis iustificari; the lecture on Romans is usually included in this period. In the second period, the emphasis falls more strongly on the Christus pro nobis which, though predominant, is combined with the Christus in nobis. Köberle considers this synthesis as set forth in Luther's commentary on Galatians of 1522-35 as the high point of Luther's creativity. In the latter part of his life Luther places more and more emphasis on the iustitia aliena in contrast with the renewal in life. Yet it is certain that Luther at all times during his life maintained the essential inner connection between forgiveness of sins and the new life while theologically distinguishing between the two concepts.³

Melanchthon is almost universally portrayed as what the Germans would call an "Epigone", a pupil who considerably weakened the great motifs of his heroic teacher. Ellinger gives a typical estimate of Melanchthon:⁴ while Melanchthon

³Ibid.

⁴Georg Ellinger, "Melanchthon", in Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1927), Zweite Auflage, III, 2074-82.

at first considered justification as a complete renewal of man, his views began to change from 1530 onward. These changes first become sharply delineated in his commentary on Romans of 1532, in which the emphasis no longer lies on man but on God, who justifies man in a forensic manner. Thus the forgiveness of sins is divorced from man's newness of life, and the Christian life tends to be a mere expression of obedience to God's law. Engelland,⁵ whose study of Melanchthon's theology is the most complete that we possess, shows that the two standard modern writers on Melanchthon's theology⁶ hold that in Melanchthon's writing prior to the Loci of 1521 justification is nothing more than the Augustinian-Thomistic qualitas in anima.⁷ On the other hand, he shows that it is the universal judgement of modern theologians that Melanchthon after 1530 divorced justification from regeneration and

⁵ Hans Engelland, Melanchthon, Glauben und Handeln (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1931).

⁶ Herrlinger and Otto Ritschl.

⁷ E.g., the Institutio of 1519 and the Lacubrationes.

made them two separate acts.^{8 9}

According to the "young" Melanchthon¹⁰ Christ's work in expiating God produced a twofold gift: 1) newness of life¹¹ and 2) forgiveness of sins.¹² If Christ earned both renewal

⁸ According to Engelland, op. cit., pp. 582-5, Karl Holl and Emanuel Hirsch have most violently attacked Melanchthon's view of justification in recent times. The other writers who hold to the purely forensic view in the later Melanchthon are N. Bonwetsch, Dorner, Ellinger, Gass, P. Gennrich, Gundert, Herrlinger (who nevertheless holds that Melanchthon, under the influence of Osiander, later connected regeneration with justification as the "psychological-ethical result of iustificatio"), Kirmsz, Köberle, op. cit., Excursus, p. 92, Lipsius, Loofs, Nagel, R. Seeberg, Tröltzsch, Wernle, Wiegand, and Tollin. Wiegand in Dogmengeschichte, (1919), pp. 126-7 states: "Bei Melanchthon hat Evangelium, Glaube, Gnade, Rechtfertigung, sich zu bloßen Verheissungen verflüchtigt," Engelland, op. cit., p. 583.

⁹ In the following presentation of Melanchthon's teaching of justification we shall follow the synthesis of Engelland, remembering that he views Melanchthon sympathetically and in effect claims single-handedly to refute all the previously-held views of Melanchthon's doctrine of justification.

¹⁰ Before 1522.

¹¹ Engelland, op. cit., p. 41: Corpus Reformatorum (henceforth abbreviated as CR), XXI, 51, 54: Christ is God's answer to the "anxium votum plarum mentium" who in their helplessness wait for the new life, "suspirant, ut suppeditet Deus spiritum purgantem, illustrantem, iustificantem. Deus enim in terras *Xeiorer* misit, qui morte sua satisfaceret pro dilectis nostris et emereretur spiritum iustificantem, hoc est innovantem affectus nostros, et qui intimam propensionem peccati mutet, ut ipsum qui crederunt esse autorem iustitiae, illorum peccata abolerentur, iis spiritus iustitiae daretur."

¹² Ibid., CR, p. 55: "Cum delictum fuerit, nullis operibus tranquillabis conscientiam, sed sola et pura fide in Christum pacaboris, qua credis iniquitates nostras ipsum tulisse." Melanchthon joins both gifts together in the Institutio (1519), CR, p. 56: "Crede Christo, invoca Christum per fidem, iam spiritus iustificator et purgator adest! Iam pax datur conscientiae, iam mortis cedit horror, iam inferni minae clausae sunt."

and forgiveness in that order, then God in justification must give men these two gifts. According to the Institutio of 1519 justification first brings renewal and then forgiveness of sin.¹³ But the Lucubrationes and the Loci of 1521 reverse the order of the two gifts of justification. By 1521 Melanchthon recognized that in justification the terrified conscience must first of all be answered.¹⁴ By now forgiveness is so emphasized that it appears to be the sole content of the Gospel: "Evangelium est promissio remissionis per Christum".¹⁵ The Gospel, "quod est simpliciter condonatio peccati per Christum seu praedicatio gratiae", is to be found throughout the entire Scripture.¹⁶ But Reinhold Seeburg¹⁷ notwithstanding, the gift of renewal does not play a

¹³Engelland, op. cit., pp. 42-4.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 44; Lucubrationes, CR, XXI, 35: "Deus promisit salutem per Christum Si credas per illum condonari peccatum ea fide saluus eris Si credas per Christum tolli peccatum, donari spiritum vivificantem Mortem vinci ea fide remittetur peccatum, vivificaberis spiritu: vinctes mortem."

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 45; Loci, p. 164: "Iustificamur...cum mortificati per legem resuscitamus verbo gratiae, quae in Christo promissa est, seu evangelio condonante peccata et illi fide adhaeremus, nihil dubitantes, quin Christi iustitia sit nostra iustitia, quin Christi satisfactio sit expiatio nostri, [sic. This is evidently a typographical error for nostra.] quin Christi resurrectio nostra sit. Breviter nihil dubitantes, quin peccata nobis condonata sint et iam favent et bene velit deus...eiusmodi iustitia est revelata, quam deus pro iustitia reputat, nempe ea, quae est per fidem Jesu Christi (Rom. 4:5; Gen. 15:6)."

¹⁷Who says in his Dogmengeschichte, IV-2, p. 426, that even this early Melanchthon makes forgiveness of sins completely independent of the experiencing of God's renewing power.

secondary role but along with faith is present as the other side of justification.¹⁸ In fact, for the "young" Melancthon forgiveness and renewal (the gift of the Spirit) are one act of God.¹⁹

Engelland makes the years 1522-1531 the second period of Melancthon's theological development. During this period Melancthon most often describes the work of Christ with the terms satisfactio²⁰ and meritum. Christ gives men two gifts: forgiveness²¹ and renewal or the gift of the Holy Spirit.²² Thus for Melancthon during this period justification in its first aspect is remissio peccatorum, a forensic act in which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to man: in Romans 5:1 iustificare means "forensi consuetudine...reum absolvere et pronuntiare iustum, sed propter alienam iustitiam, videlicet Christi, quae aliena iustitia communicatur nobis per

¹⁸ Engelland, op. cit., p. 46; Lucubrationes, CR, KXI, 35: "Et iam homo (cum haec credit) iustus est et habet spiritum instaurentem." Loci, pp. 184-5: "Coepit enim iustificatio est, non consummata. Primitias spiritus accipimus (Rom. 8:23), nondum decimas."

¹⁹ Engelland, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 109-11.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 111-2; Annotationes in Joannem (1523), CR, XIV, 1158: "Quod sit Christi officium, ex verbo oportet cognosci quod praedicat. Praedicat autem remissionem peccatorum: non condit legem aliquam, sed se exhibet, promittens remissionem peccatorum omnibus credentibus."

²² Apology 110, 11: "Christus ad hoc datus est, ut propter eum donentur nobis remissio peccatorum et spiritus sanctus, qui novam ac aeternam vitam et aeternam iustitiam in nobis pariat."

fidem."²³ Faith is accounted for righteousness: "Hanc fidem imputat Deus pro iusticia coram ipso, Rom. 3 et 4."²⁴

The second aspect of justification for Melancthon in this period is renewal or the gift of the Holy Ghost.²⁵ Justification is the new birth.²⁶ Justification is regeneration.²⁷ Faith is the new life: "Haec fides cum sit nova vita, necessario parit novos motus et opera."²⁸

Melancthon's final period of theological development extends from 1532 until his death. According to Melancthon

²³ Ibid. 219, 305.

²⁴ Confessio Augustana, Article IV. Engelland, op. cit., pp. 114-5.

²⁵ Annotationes in Joannem (1523), CR, XIV, 1047: "Satis est monere, legem esse, quae praecipit facienda, Evangelium esse remissionem peccatorum et donationem Spiritus sancti per Christum." Dispositio (1529), CR, XV, 459, 466: "Quoties gratiae mentio fit, haec duo complectitur scriptura, remissionem peccatorum et donationem Spiritus sancti."

²⁶ Engelland, op. cit., pp. 117-8; Annotationes in Joannem, CR, XIV, 1081-2: "Primum enim propositum est, navitatem carnis in totum immundam esse, non posse iustificari nisi renatos. Eam regenerationem fieri aqua, i.e. mortificatione et spiritu, qui vivificat. Deinde docet, renasci id esse quod credere in filium, quam exaltari oporteat sicut serpentem." "Christus iustificationem dicit esse regenerationem, hoc est vero mortificare carnem et renovari spiritu."

²⁷ Ibid., p. 118; Apology in the rejected pages, CR, XXVII, 468, 470, 476: "Constat remissionem peccatorum in nobis esse iustificationem et regenerationem." "Iustificatio est regeneratio, ut Christus docet Johan. iii. Nisi quis renatus fuerit etc. Non enim facimus legem nisi iustificati et renati." Engelland also quotes several passages from the Apology in which iustificatio and regeneratio are equated. We shall discuss this question shortly.

²⁸ Apology, 209, 250.

in this period two words in chapter 53 of Isaiah describe the Messiah's deed: gestare (to bear) and tollere (to take away). Therefore ἀνερ²⁹ in St. John 1:29 has the double meaning of sustinere and auferre peccata mundi. Christ came not only to satisfy and fulfill the law for man but also to effect the new obedience in them.³⁰ "Ad hoc apparuit filius Dei, ut destruat opera Diaboli. Regeneramur igitur in reconciliatione, ut nova obedientia in nobis inchoetur."³¹

Therefore Christ is our righteousness in a two-fold manner:

Christus esse nostram iusticiam, quod utroque modo intelligatur, et quia ipsius iusticia nobis donatur, hoc est, propter eum iusti et accepti sumus, et quia efficit in nobis novam iusticiam et vitam ...huius iusticia tibi donatur, ita, ut sis propter eum iustus et acceptus, et ne sit tantum imputatio manente peccato et morte, hic iusticiam et vitam

²⁹Engelland, op. cit., p. 300; Enarratio in Joannem (1536), GR, XV, 48. In GR, XXV, 90, Melancthon enlarges upon this auferre: "Anfort (sc. Christus) etiam, placans nobis patrem suo merito, et imputans nobis suam obedientiam et iustitiam; denique et re ipsa delens peccatum et mortem, reddens iustitiam et vitam aeternam. Docet igitur Johannes, non tantum passurum esse Christum tu redemptorem, sed etiam iustificaturum nos, et sanctificaturum, et tandem salvaturum, quia in hac vita inchoatur tantum in nobis novitas spiritualis, postea consummabitur."

³⁰Engelland, op. cit., p. 302; Declamationes (1547), GR, XI, 780: "Deus ipse inquit: vivo ego, nolo mortem peccatoris, sed ut convertatur et vivat. Patefecit se igitur, dedit Evangelii vocem, misit filium, non ad hoc unum opus, ut arguat peccata, sed praecipue ad hunc finem, ut voca Evangelii et Spiritu suo sancto consolatur et erigat pectora nostra, et in nobis lucem et iusticiam accendat, nosque abelito peccato et morte haerodes vitae et salutis aeternae efficiat." Enarratio in Joannem (1536), GR, XV, 177: Christ is not only doctor but also "dator et effector est novae lucis et vitae," who gives "Spiritum sanctum et vitam aeternam."

³¹Engelland, op. cit., p. 304; Loci Communes Theologici (1543), GR, XXI, 762.

aeternam in nobis efficit.³²

Therefore the concept of gratia includes both gifts of Christ:

Christus donat nobis gratiam, hoc est, remissionem peccatorum gratis, et efficit in nobis veram Dei agnitionem, verum amorem, veram fiduciam, veram invocationem.³³

During this period Melancthon again declares that iustificari is primarily to be declared just.³⁴ Justification is an imputatio iustitiae Christi. At times the relationship between justification and regeneration is expressed with coniungere, comitari, sequi, accedere, addi, primus--postea.³⁵

³²Enarratio in Joannem (1536), CR, XV, 355.

³³Engelland, op. cit., p. 306; Commentarius ad Romanos (1549), CR, XV, 498, 627, 629.

³⁴Ibid., p. 315; Commentarius ad Romanos (1532) on 2:14 and 3:14: "Iustificari proprie significat iustum reputari, hoc est acceptum reputari, sic intelligatur relative, sicut in foro usurpatur Ebraica consuetudine, iustificari pro eo quod est iustum pronuntiari, ut si quis dicat populus Romanus iustificavit Scipionem accusatum a tribuno plebis...iustificari non significat proprie habere novas virtutes. Sed relative intelligatur de voluntate Dei pro eo quod est approbati seu accepti a Deo." Epistolae (1555), CR, VIII, 573: "Auch heisset das Wort iustificare nicht innerlich fromm und verwandelt werden, oder innerlich vergöttet werden, und also gerecht seyn, wie die Mönche und Osiander dichten und schreiben, sondern heisset in Paulo: ex reo non reum fieri, das ist, für Gott angenehm seyn, als gerecht geachtet und angenommen werden."

³⁵Engelland, op. cit., p. 319; Epistolae (1537), CR, III, 431: "Iustificari significat consequi remissionem peccatorum, cui coniuncta est donatio Spiritus sancti." Postilla Melancthoniana (1549 ff.), CR, XXV, 579: "Iustificationem sequitur sanctificatio et novitas." Confessio Augustana (1540), CR, XXVI, 368: "Cum necessariam de fide doctrinam et consolationem Ecclesiis proponimus, additur et doctrina de bonis operibus."

But there also remains the second aspect of justification.³⁶ During this period regeneratio has two aspects for Melanchthon: 1) the religious, involving the forgiveness of sins; 2) the ethical, involving the new life.³⁷ During these years Melanchthon describes renovatio as both the purpose and the goal of justification and as the content of justification.³⁸ But since Melanchthon at times expresses this twofold aspect of justification with the word simul, the two aspects cannot be thought of as separate and independent

³⁶ Engelland, op. cit., pp. 320-1; this is called "regeneratio, renovatio, nova vita, consolatio, vita aeterna, invocatio."

³⁷ Quaestiones Academicae (1551), CR, X, 317: "Regeneratio utrumque complectitur. Primum remissionem peccatorum seu imputationem iustitiae. Deinde et inchoationem."

³⁸ Engelland, op. cit., pp. 327-30; Commentarius ad Romanos (1532): "Cum iustificat Deus, ita iustificat, ut novam vitam, novam sapientiam ac iustitiam afferat, et debemus obedientiam Deo, etiam si aliud quiddam proposuit, propter quod iustos pronunciet." Enarratio in Joannem (1536), CR, XV, 83: "Hab. 2 iusti = accepti Deo reputamur et vivificamur, hoc est, nova vita et luce induimur, quae est inchoatio vitae aeternae." Disputationes, CR, XXI, 664: "Cum autem de iustificatione loquimur, necesse est haec tria complecti, remissionem peccatorum, et imputationem iustitiae, et donationem Spiritus sancti vivificantis corda fide, id est, fiducia mediatoris, in quo motu vere fit hoc in nobis, quod dicit Christus: Spiritus Sanctus glorificabit me. Tunc vere agnoscitur mediator, et simul fit inchoatio novae obedientiae."

entities.³⁹ Faith, then, is the connection through which the promise of God goes over into the reality of man's life life.⁴⁰ Faith is even identified with the new life and eternal life.⁴¹

According to Engelland, then, Melancthon maintained the essential connection between the twofold aspects of justification all his life, with varying degrees of emphasis. But the focal point was always imputation of righteousness. I would tend to agree with this conclusion at least for the period until the year 1531. But it appears that Melancthon thereafter became more and more inclined to isolate forgiveness from the renewal of life, as is evidenced by the relationship between them expressed by sequitur, additur, etc., although these expressions are in tension with or are explained by those statements in which the new life is said to come simultaneously with forgiveness. At any rate, it would seem that the traditional modern interpretation of

³⁹Engelland, op. cit., pp. 336-7; Propositiones (1551), GR, XII, 416-7: "Hic si quis dicit, nos tantum loqui de imaginaria imputatione, non de regeneratione, quae fit Deo in nobis imputatione, palam refutant eum testimonia omnium nostrarum ecclesiarum." Enarratio in Joannem (1556), GR, XV, 429: "Cum audimus nominari remissionem peccatorum, simul complectamur donationem Spiritus sancti, vitae aeternae et omnes promissiones proprias Evangelii, quod recepti a Deo exaudiamur, iuvemur et defendamur a Deo. Denique omnia beneficia Evangelii comprehenduntur appellatione remissionis peccatorum."

⁴⁰Engelland, op. cit., pp. 339 and 341.

⁴¹Ibid.

Melanchthon's doctrine of justification requires considerable revision on the basis of the research of Engelland.

Melanchthon's teaching of justification in the Apology has been the occasion for the production of an extensive literature.⁴² The reason for this is that in the Apology Melanchthon frequently identifies iustum reputari with iustum effici and iustificatio with regeneratio. Following is a cross-section of such passages:

Non sic de fide sentimus, sed hoc defendimus, quod proprie ac vero ipsa fide propter Christum iusti reputemur seu accepti Deo simus. Et qui iustificari significat ex iniustis iustos effici seu regenerari, significat et iustos pronuntiarī seu reputari. Utroque enim modo loquitur Scriptura. Ideo primum volumus hoc ostendere, quod sola fides ex iniusto iustum efficiat, hoc est, accipiat remissionem peccatorum.⁴³

Consequi remissionem peccatorum est iustificari iusta illud, Ps. 32:1 Beati, quorum remissae sunt iniquitates. Sola fide in Christum, non per dilectionem aut opera consequimur remissionem peccatorum, etsi dilectio sequitur fidem. Igitur sola fide iustificamur, intelligendo iustificationem, ex iniusto iustum effici seu regenerari.⁴⁴

Hactenus satis copiose ostendimus et testimoniis Scripturae et argumentis ex Scriptura sumptis, ut res magis fieret perspicua, quod sola fide consequimur remissionem peccatorum propter Christum, et quod sola fide iustificamur, hoc est, ex iniustis

⁴² Ibid., pp. 541-58 gives an extensive review and summary of the literature on this point.

⁴³ Concordia Triglotta (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), Apology, Article IV, p. 140, 72. This is the central passage in dispute in the Apology.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 142, Art. IV, 76-8.

iusti efficiamus seu regeneremur.⁴⁵

Friedrich Loofs provided the impetus for a long controversy concerning justification in the Apology.⁴⁶ In this essay he departed from the traditional exclusively forensic interpretation of Melanchthon's pronouncements on justification in the Apology. Taking as his starting point the criticism of Albrecht Ritschl that later conceptions of justification have often been read into the older symbols, Loofs attempts to prove that "one has no right to claim that the iustificatio of the locus de iustificatione is an actus forensis for the older symbols." He rejects passages from the Apology which expressly call justification a forensic act⁴⁷ as being either irrelevant or as not belonging to the original text and maintains that Melanchthon treats justification in the Apology as meaning both to be declared and to be made righteous. He claims that paragraph 72 of Article IV of the Apology, quoted above, constitutes the heading and summary for the remainder of the article; specifically, that in paragraphs 75-121 Melanchthon meant to prove that sola fide ex

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 154, Art. IV, 117.

⁴⁶In his essay, "Die Bedeutung der Rechtfertigungslehre der Apologie für die Symbolik der luth. Kirche," in Theologische Studien und Kritiken (1884), p. 613 ff. Engelland, op. cit., pp. 542-4.

⁴⁷For example, Triglotta, p. 190, Art. III (as Triglotta has it), 131 and p. 204, 104.

iniusto iustum effici, and that paragraphs 122-182⁴⁸ are to prove that sola fide iustum reputari.

Albert Elchhorn continued the discussion of this question⁴⁹ with an essay in which he begins by stating his agreement with Loofs' refutation of the traditional interpretation of the doctrine of justification in the Apology.⁵⁰ His goal is to prove that the iusum effici and reputari of the Apology are not to be distinguished conceptually but that Melancthon uses these formulas interchangeably. He maintains that paragraphs 75-85 prove quod sola fides ex iniusto iustum efficiat, and 86-116 that iustificari significat et iustos pronuntiari. Nevertheless he discovers that according to paragraphs 75-85 faith obtains forgiveness and to be righteous is to be "pleasing to God," Deo acceptus. Therefore he concludes that regeneratio and iusum effici in the Apology apply only to that religious situation between God and man in which God declares man just. Regeneratio does not apply primarily to the new life begun in the Christian but denotes the

⁴⁸In Triglotta paragraphs 1-60 in Article III, De Dilectione. In reality, the section entitled De Dilectione was not a separate article in the original edition but a part of Article IV on justification. However, in one of the early editions De Dilectione was entitled "Article III;" this error has been perpetuated by most of the editions of the Lutheran symbols, including that of J. T. Mueller and the Triglotta. But the recent critical edition of the symbols published in Germany in 1930 places De Dilectione under Article IV.

⁴⁹"Die Rechtfertigungslehre der Apologie," Theologische Studien und Kritiken (1887), p. 415 ff.

⁵⁰Engelland, op. cit., pp. 544-5.

comfort, joy, and peace which are a result of God's forgiveness. Thus the effici is to be understood from the viewpoint of the iustus reputari. The result of his investigation contradicts his goal as announced at the beginning of the essay.

According to Engelland, the lines usually followed in the controversy concerning the Apology's doctrine of justification are those set down by Loofs and Eichhorn. As samples of this voluminous literature I have examined Carl Stange, "Über eine Stelle in der Apologie,"⁵¹ and Johannes Kunze, Die Rechtfertigungslehre in der Apologie.⁵² Stange, in criticism of Eichhorn and Loofs, maintains that all of paragraphs 75-116 prove only the statement, quod sola fide ex iniustus iusti efficiamur. Stange's thesis, in opposition to Eichhorn, is that justification in the Apology means to be made actually righteous.⁵³ In addition he points out that for the proper understanding of the Apology it is necessary to investigate the antitheses to which Melancthon directed his remarks concerning justification in the Apology.⁵⁴ These antitheses were not to be found in the Confutation, says Stange, but in the dogmatics of the time, particularly in the

⁵¹In Theologische Aufsätze (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1905), pp. 50-73, originally having appeared in Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift (1892), p. 846 ff.

⁵²Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1908.

⁵³Stange, op. cit., pp. 62-4.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 67 ff.

Tewtschen Theology (1528) of Berthold of Chiemsee. In this treatise Berthold says, "Faith is the necessary beginning for man to obtain grace, justification, and salvation from God." The Sacraments are also necessary. He writes against the sola fide.

In 71 Melancthon begins his polemics against the view that faith is only the necessary beginning of justification. Berthold says that faith is not sufficient to make a just man out of an unjust. The grace of God effects this change "Sacramenta ergo in fide suscipientibus praestant iustificationem, quae alioquin sola fide non acquiritur...et sic ex iniusto facit deus iustum." Over against him Melancthon in 72 contends expressly that sola fides ex iniusto iustum efficiat. The pronuntiari of 72 is also taken over from Berthold:

Quoties Paulus de fide scribit, semper intelligit feracem, formatam et operosam, qua homo propensus est, quantum potest, bene agere. Etsi facultas operandi deest, nihilominus fides iustificat ob animi affectum ad bona opera. Hoc respectu fides as iustitiam reputatur...Sic fides est initium sed non complementum iustificationis.

These words explain not only why Melancthon used reputari at the end of 71, but also why he replaced reputari in 72 with the more exact formula effici. For the Romanists also were agreed to the formula: quod ipsa fide iusti reputemur; but they were opposed to this, that sola fides ex iniusto iustum faciat. Melancthon had to direct his argumentation against the proof of this assertion.

Kunze,⁵⁵ on the other hand, maintains that the Apology teaches a consistently imputative view of justification. The sheer statistical weight of evidence is against the effective view: reputari is used five times before 72. In the following article, De Dilectione Legis, the formula iustum reputari is used twenty-one times, but the formula effici only once. In the remainder of the Apology one would look in vain for this formula, "ebenso wie bei Luther."⁵⁶ Kunze quotes from Luther's large commentary on Galatians to prove that Luther also teaches a strictly forensic view.⁵⁷ Kunze likewise shows that the Romanist opponents considered justification to be a process of ex iniusto iustum effici.⁵⁸ Furthermore, even if the Apology does not give two distinctive meanings to the word regeneratio, there is nevertheless a distinction to be noted: first, it means iustum reputari; it is also used for the beginning of the motus spirituales in men.⁵⁹ Since Kunze resorts to arbitrary changes of the text in paragraphs 72, 86, and 117 of Article IV, it would seem that he finds those passages in which the iustum effici is stressed too difficult to reconcile with his conviction of a

⁵⁵Kunze, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 15-20.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 21-6.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 31-7.

consistently forensic doctrine of justification in the Apology.

Wilhelm Walther⁶⁰ maintains the same point of view which Kunze holds, although he rejects all attempts to alter the text. Melanchthon used the iustum officii because the opponents explained iustificari in this manner. Melanchthon himself explains what he means in iustus officii in 72 in the words, "Hoc est, accipere remissionem peccatorum." With this explanation he contradicts the definition of iustum officii as an effectual new creation of man. For if God forgives man's sin, it is no longer there. Coram Deo such a man is no sinner but actually made righteous. Walther, too, maintains that regeneratio has a peculiar ambivalence in the Apology. When Melanchthon speaks of regeneratio in the realm of iustificatio, he does not think of it primarily as the source for ethical powers but as a spring of comfort, joy, and peace. Therefore through faith, which grasps the forgiveness of sins, we are born into a new mode of existence consisting in righteousness, comfort, peace, and joy. Pieper⁶¹ and Elert⁶² likewise maintain the purely forensic

⁶⁰ Lehrbuch der Symbolik (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1924), p. 369. This paragraph is based on ibid., pp. 369-71.

⁶¹ Franz Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917), II, 639, n. 1499: "Die Gerechtmachung oder Wiedergeburt bezeichnet hier nämlich nicht eine sittliche Erneuerung im Menschen, sondern die Annahme der Vergebung der Sünden."

⁶² Elert, op. cit., pp. 85-6.

interpretation of the doctrine of justification in the Apology.

According to Schlink, whose treatment of the theology of the Lutheran symbols is the most recent addition to our literature,⁶³ the fact that the terms remissio peccatorum and iustificatio are interchanged promiscuously in the Lutheran symbols must be the starting-point for any interpretation of the doctrine of justification in the Apology. The actual theme of Article IV of the Apology is not the problem of "ideal" versus "effective" justification, but the thesis that justification is effected sola fide propter Christum. Any attempt to ascertain whether justification in Article IV is a forensic judgement or a renewing act of God will terminate in a debacle, as the debate over this question has demonstrated. Since it is the concern of Melancthon in the Apology to stress the justifying word of God, he gives relatively little attention to the dogmatic distinction between the effects of this justifying word. Schlink quotes W. E. Weber to the effect that the doctrine of justification embraces all the gifts of the Gospel, but there are tensions among these gifts. One must not attempt to resolve these tensions by stressing only one aspect of them.⁶⁴

⁶³Edmund Schlink, Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1946), pp. 136-7, 140-1, 156-7, on which this paragraph and the following are based.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 137.

First of all, then, the symbols treat justification from the viewpoint of God's forensic judgement; this is true also of the Apology. But if God considers the sinner righteous, then he is indeed righteous. If the sinner who is declared righteous did not thereby become righteous, that would be a surrender of the truthfulness of God's word, in which he pronounces the sinner righteous. Therefore in Apology IV, 72, Melanchthon can say that iustificari is ex iniustus iustus effici seu regenerari as well as that it is iustus pronuntiari seu reputari. To be declared just is equivalent to being made just, and to be made just is equivalent to being declared just. Therefore it is impossible to separate conceptually or temporally the iustus effici and the iustus pronuntiari of Article IV as representative of two different acts of God. However, even here the iustus effici is to be understood from the viewpoint of the forensic verdict of God and not vice versa. Thus in the judgement of God, and this means, in truth, the sinner whom God pronounces righteous is righteous, even if he cannot begin to perceive the beginning of this righteousness. Nevertheless, the forensic character of justification in Article IV is not hereby diminished.

My own conclusion in this controversy would tend to follow the general lines of Schlink's argumentation. In a detailed analysis of Article IV Engelland also shows conclusively that Melanchthon's starting-point and motif is that of sola fide and not the problem of the effective or the forensic

nature of justification.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Melancthon's continuous, almost harping insistence on the forensic character of God's judgement--that it is forgiveness of sins, that we are accounted righteous coram Deo--is truly overpowering. Yet Melancthon's statement, "Igitur sola fide iustificamur, intelligendo iustificationem ex iniusto iustum effici seu regenerari"⁶⁶ and others like it simply must be faced. It seems to me a doubtful procedure to attempt to distinguish, as Walther does, between a twofold usage of regeneratio in the Apology. When God declares man righteous, man is righteous. Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation. And so the forensic judgement takes the logical preeminence. Yet life and salvation are grounded upon forgiveness.

While Luther and Melancthon throughout their lives emphasized primarily God's forensic action of forgiveness of sins, Osiander reversed the process by concentrating on justification as a process in man. Osiander's views of justification were influenced by "linguistic, philosophical Logos speculations of Cabalistic and Neoplatonic sort, which he had acquired particularly from Reuchlin and Pico della

⁶⁵ Engelland, op. cit., pp. 559-68.

⁶⁶ Triglotta, p. 142, Art. IV, 78.

Mirandola.⁶⁷ The Biblical basis for his doctrine of justification Osiander found in the Prologue and chapters 6 and 14-17 of St. John. His fundamental emphasis may be summarized in the statement that the indwelling Christ, the eternal inner Word of God, activates in the hearts of the believers the knowledge of God's grace and goodness as revealed in the Gospel. For Osiander, faith was primarily trust directed toward Christ dwelling in the heart. Faith in the atonement is a fides historica. Thus Osiander came to think of the righteousness of faith as a qualitas in animo.⁶⁸

The press of controversy forced him to enlarge upon these earlier views after 1549, when he became professor at Königsberg. Christ was the mediator by whose death men have forgiveness of sins. But forgiveness is only the basic presupposition for actual justification, which consists in possessing the eternal righteousness of God in faith. By the preaching of the "outer Word" man believes in Christ's atonement and obtains forgiveness; but the outer Word is accompanied by the inner, living, and eternal Word of God, which

⁶⁷ Köberle, op. cit., p. 93, Excursus. The most recent standard interpretation of Osiander is Emmanuel Hirsch, Die Theologie des Andreas Osiander und ihre geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen (Göttingen, 1919), which was not at my disposal. For other literature on Osiander see Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard: A Study in the History of Theology (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1950), pp. 133-4, notes 104-13. For the following discussion I have relied on Otto Ritschl, Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1912), II-1, 455-66.

⁶⁸ O. Ritschl, op. cit., pp. 457-59.

enters the hearts of the believers as a divine power. Faith in this inner Word brings true justification.

Den gerechtfertigen heist eigentlich, den menschen von Sünden freien, das er kein Sünde mehr habe, sondern an der Stad der Sünde Gerechtigkeit habe. Die Gerechtfertigung hebt an im Menschen, wan er anfehlet zu glauben, und wird volendt, wan er gestorben ist.⁶⁹

In fact, justification is the entire process by which righteousness is infused into men through faith in Christ. This righteousness is God Himself, the same God who is love and who became incarnate in Christ Jesus. From eternity God's Word was predestined to become incarnate, even had men not fallen into sin. In His existence before the creation of the world, the Son was not only God's inner Word but also the prefiguration of human nature, which He was to appropriate and glorify. The image of God in which man was created was man's likeness to the Son, the prefiguration. Christ became man to redeem him from sin and to restore to him the image of God, which consists in the perfect indwelling of the Holy Trinity in the hearts of the believers.⁷⁰

Thus the righteousness of the Christian is the divine nature of the Word dwelling in him, but it is the divine nature as incarnate in Christ. Righteousness which comes by faith is not faith itself but "Jhesus Christus warer Gott und Mensch, der durch den Glauben in unsern Herzen wohnt."⁷¹ Yet

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 461; Predigt über Rom. 5:5-7 (1553).

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 460-1.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 463; Von dem Einigen Mittler (1551).

because Osiander recognized that the Biblical meaning of iustificare is at times iustum pronuntiare, he says that the sins of the believers committed before their justification are forgiven by the righteousness given to them in justification. He even taught that the sins which the believers still commit are covered by the righteousness--Christ and His divine nature--which they already possess. Yet this phase of Osiander's thought seems to have no organic relationship to the whole of his theology.⁷²

The focal points about which Melancthon's reply to Osiander revolved were the demand of certainty of the terrified conscience and the preservation of the honor Christi.⁷³ He agrees with Osiander that God is the cause of the new life in the believers and that God Himself dwells in the saints. But Osiander passes lightly over forgiveness. Forgiveness should not be excluded from the dealing of God with men. Osiander destroys the comfort of the saints by taking from them the certainty of the iustitia imputata. If the new life is the basis for justification, then the criterion of the law intrudes itself again into justification. Thus Osiander's system is a doctrina legis. But where the law rules, there is no forgiveness, and even the renati remain sinners who need

⁷²Ibid., pp. 462-6.

⁷³For this discussion I depend on Engelland, op. cit., pp. 375-80. Cf. also Elert, op. cit., p. 89 and Pieper, op. cit., pp. 633-40.

remissio and imputatio. Christ does not cease to be the mediator for the renati also.

Article III of the Formula of Concord deals specifically with the views of Osiander concerning justification.⁷⁴ In opposition to Osiander the Formula teaches that Christ is man's righteousness according to both His human and divine natures.⁷⁵ The believers' righteousness before God consists in God's forgiveness of their sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to them. Faith, the medium leptikon by which this righteousness is received, is not a bare notitia historica but a divine gift by which we know Christ as our Redeemer in the verbum evangelii and trust in Him. Iustificare means exclusively to absolve or declare free from sins. The words, vivificatio and regeneratio, used in Article IV of the Apology in the realm of justification, are to be understood in the forensic sense. Good works and love, directio, do not belong in the article concerning justification. Nevertheless, this saying of Luther's is quoted with approval: "Bone conveniunt et sunt connexa inseparabiliter fides et opera; sed sola fides est, quae apprehendit benedictionem sine operibus, et tamen nunquam est sola."⁷⁶ Although it is true that the Triune God dwells by faith in the

⁷⁴And of Stancarus, who taught that Christ is the believer's righteousness only according to His human nature.

⁷⁵Triglotta, Epitome, pp. 791-7, Solida Declaratio, pp. 917-37.

⁷⁶Ibid., Sol. Decl., p. 929.

believers, this indwelling is not to be equated with the righteousness of faith.

Elert stoutly defends the Formula's distinction between justification and renovation. However, upon this distinction the later dogmaticians based their system of the ordo salutis, which, says Elert, "can be looked upon as dubious." The importance of this conceptual differentiation was to safeguard Luther's fundamental insight of the iustitia Dei, which is accounted and imputed to, but not implanted into, men; for otherwise it would not be a iustitia Dei, but iustitia hominis. This distinction also served to uphold the honor Christi.⁷⁷

Against this background we shall be equipped to understand more fully the issues at stake in the Holl-Walther controversy, in which the variegated emphases of the sixteenth-century doctrine of justification form a strong undercurrent.

Karl Holl,⁷⁸ 1866-1926, became a professor at the University of Berlin in the early years of this century and soon distinguished himself by editing the writings of several of the early Greek church fathers. He became especially interested in early eastern monasticism. His training in the investigation of the sources for early church history thoroughly equipped him to work with the source materials for the

⁷⁷ Elert, op. cit., pp. 90-1. Cf. also Köberle, op. cit., ix, and Walther, op. cit., pp. 277-8.

⁷⁸ Cf. Gustav Jülicher, "Karl Holl", Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, II, 1994-6.

Reformation period, particularly with the earliest writings of Luther. His ten essays and addresses on Luther and Luther's theology, collected in Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte: Luther, have had tremendous influence on the Luther renaissance in Germany and Sweden during the past thirty years. He has been the fiercest critic of Tröltzsch's interpretation of Luther and the Reformation. The standard criticism of Holl is that his Ritschlian propensities guided him in the interpretation of Luther's earlier writings, in particular, and that he thus modernized Luther to an unwarranted degree.

Wilhelm Walther,⁷⁹ 1846-1924, was a well-known Luther scholar, Lutheran theologian, and professor of church history at the University of Rostock. He edited volumes XIX and XXIII of the Weimar edition of Luther's works, wrote many books and monographs on Luther's theology, and defended Luther against Roman Catholic attacks (e.g., Für Luther wider Rom). M. Reu considered him the outstanding Lutheran preacher of the first quarter of the twentieth century.⁸⁰ His theological position was conservative and "positive". In the year of his death he published his Lehrbuch der Symbolik.

⁷⁹Paul Glaue, "Wilhelm Walther", Ibid., V, 1762.

⁸⁰M. Reu, Homiletics (Columbus: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), fourth edition, p. 162.

CHAPTER II

KARL HOLL'S INTERPRETATION OF LUTHER'S

DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

According to Holl, Luther's lecture on Romans of 1515-16 shows that by that time his teaching of justification had reached maturity.¹ But the two Protestant scholars who investigated the lecture on Romans before Holl--Flicker and Loofs--did not believe that Luther had fully developed his doctrine of justification. Both Flicker and Loofs discovered a degree of uncertainty concerning justification in this lecture to the extent that Luther denied the possibility of obtaining the assurance of salvation, according to their understanding of the lecture.² Passages like the following seem to suggest such an interpretation: "Nemo enim...exponitur se

¹Karl Holl, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte: Luther. 2: "Die Rechtfertigungslehre in Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Frage der Heilsgewissheit," (Sechste Auflage; Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1932), pp. 111-54.

²Ibid., p. 112.

esse iustificatum."³ "Nunquam scire possumus, an iustificati simus, an credamus."⁴ "Isti vero [the truly justified] ignorant, quando iusti sunt, quia ex deo reputante iusti tantummodo sunt, cuius reputationem nemo novit, sed solum postulare et sperare debet."⁵ "Quia sicut deus et consilium ipsius nobis ignota sunt, ita et iustitia nostra."⁶ This interpretation of Loofs and Ficker offered Holl the occasion to investigate thoroughly Luther's teaching of justification as developed in the lecture on Romans of 1515.⁷

Holl discovers, first of all, that in the lecture on Romans of 1515 Luther considers justification from the viewpoint of God and looks upon it as a deed of God. Luther is certain that he is dealing with the true, living God, while popular catholic piety has to do with a god fashioned according to its own imagination. Luther's doctrine of justifica-

³Holl quotes from Luthers Vorlesung über den Römerbrief, 1515-1516, ed. Johannes Ficker (Leipzig, 1903), 2 vols. In the lecture on Romans Luther followed the scholastic custom of dividing the commentary into glossae and scholia. The glossae were a brief explanation of the words of the Biblical text which the students were to copy. The lecturer then dictated to them the scholia, which were longer theological comments on certain important passages. Cf. Heinrich Boehmer, Road to Reformation (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1946), p. 122. Henceforth "I" indicates the glossae in Ficker's edition and "II" the scholia: I 54, 14 f.

⁴II 89, 2 f.

⁵II 104, 16 ff.

⁶II 124, 20.

⁷Holl, op. cit., pp. 112-3.

tion leads to a unified concept of God which has an ethical basis.⁸ In this lecture Luther holds that justification is a free act of God by which God accounts man righteous.⁹

This declaratory act of God at the same time creates a fellowship between man and God, and the man who is justified can express his condition most powerfully by saying that he "has God." Justification is a pure gift of God's grace, since there is nothing in man which would merit the bestowal of justification. This Luther maintained over against the Scholastic view that prior to the reception of justification man can make certain preparations for it.¹⁰

However, Holl maintains that a certain apparent contradiction in Luther's teaching concerning justification constitutes the real problem in this area of Luther's teaching in the lecture on Romans. God justifies only the man who is a sinner.¹¹ Yet after Luther has said: "Non enim quia

⁸ Ibid., pp. 113-4.

⁹ Ibid., p. 114, n. 3, II 121, 10 ff. "'Iustitia' et 'in iustitia' multum aliter, quam philosophi et iuriste accipiunt, in scriptura accipitur, patet, quia illi qualitatem asserunt animo etc. sed iustitia scripture magis pendet ab imputatione dei, quam ab esse rei. Ille enim habet iustitiam, non qui qualitatem solum habet...sed quam deus...misericorditer reputat et voluit iustum apud se haberi".

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 115-7. Before one receives the gratia habitualis one must facere quod in se est, must have the meritum de congruo. Throughout the lecture on Romans Luther vigorously combats this view.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 117; I 37, 14. "Iustificat...impium i.e. qui ex se non nisi impius est coram deo."

iustus est, ideo reputatur a deo, sed qui reputatur a deo, ideo iustus est," he immediately continues: "Nullus autem reputatur iustus, nisi qui legem opere implet, nullus autem implet, nisi qui in Christum credit."¹² In the Glosses, commenting on Romans 2:13, Luther expands the words of the text thus: "Factores (quales sunt soli, qui gratiam habent voluntatis male victricem) legis iustificabuntur = iusti reputabuntur coram deo."¹³ On the one hand, then, Luther says that God justifies only the unrighteous; meanwhile, according to these latter quotations, he maintains that God justifies only the man who keeps the law. According to Holl, the solution to this problem cannot be found where some have professed to find it, namely, in Luther's conception of the work of Christ. Although Luther had already developed the position that Christ has satisfied the law and although he based the possibility of God's forgiveness on this satisfaction, he does not say with Melancthon that God looks upon man's appropriation of Christ's righteousness as the fulfillment of the law.¹⁴

The problem is rather to be approached from the viewpoint of the relationship of justification and the new life. For Luther justification is the basis for the new life. Even

¹²I 20, 16.

¹³I 20, 2 f.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 118; Holl does not believe that the words "Nullus autem implet, nisi qui in Christum credit" apply to the situation.

the Scholastics had urged this. But over against the Scholastics Luther emphasized the fact that the entire new life from beginning to end is the work of God. Grace applies to man as a whole and dominates the entire course of man's life.¹⁵ Man appropriates God's grace in faith. For Luther in the lecture on Romans faith is the obedience of man over against the divine will to fellowship as expressed in God's verdict of justification.¹⁶ This faith is a divine gift which God brings forth through His "promise."¹⁷ Thus faith places man into fellowship with God. But since God cannot endure anything unholy in his presence, it is inconceivable that God would establish fellowship with man without the further intention of remaking him.¹⁸

In his later writings Luther speaks of the renewal of man as proceeding out of faith. Traces of this idea can also be found in Romans. However, in Romans Luther conceives of

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 119, n. 2; II 275, 23: "Fides nihil aliud est quam obedientia spiritus."

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 119, n. 3; II 247, 33 ff.: "Quando enim deus verbum emittet, suo geets mit gewalt, ut non tantum amicos et applaudentes, sed inimicos et resistentes convertat."

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 119-20, n. 5; II 56, 13 ff.: "Deus ipsos et omnes velut mendaces, iniustos, insipientes, infirmos peccatores miseratus cupit sua veritate, iustitia, sapientia, virtute, innocentia veraces, iustos, sapientes, fortes, innocentes officere ac si de mendacio, iniustitia, insipientia, infirmitate, peccato liberare."

¹⁹ Henceforth Luther's Vorlesung über den Römerbrief of 1515-1516 will be referred to simply as Romans.

faith chiefly as an act of understanding or of perception, while he ascribes the renewal of the will to a second action of God.²⁰ Nevertheless it is clear that the distinction between faith as understanding and love as renewal is only a logical one, since Luther lived existentially in the stream of events. In fact, for Luther the gift of grace (or of the Spirit) is practically identical with the indwelling of Christ in the believer. Christus in nobis is a personal will, a personal, moral power.²¹ For Luther the concept "grace" is the same as intuitum sue bonitatis, a contemplation of the divine goodness. This bonitas is the only modus vere convertendi. When man beholds this bonitas, God draws him to Himself. Bonitas effects a longing love toward God, which does not require a specific commandment: "Amor ille omnia eum docebit."²²

God by His grace begins to renew man in order that He might make man perfect.²³ Although perfection occurs only in death,²⁴ what is important for Luther is that it actually

²⁰ Ibid., p. 120, n. 3; II 76, 17 ff.: "Intellectus... est ipsa fides... Affectus autem sive requisitus dei, est ipsa charitas dei, facit nos velle et amare, quod intellectus facit intellegere."

²¹ Ibid., pp. 120-1.

²² Ibid., p. 121.

²³ Ibid., p. 121, n. 3; II 94, 20: "Incepit [sc. deus], ut perficiat."

²⁴ Ibid., p. 122, n. 1; II 73, 31: "Donec perfecti sanentur, quod fit in morte."

does occur. The goal which God has set before Himself in justifying man--to bring man to complete perfection--He actually does bring about. Man will actually become righteous so that he can stand in the final judgement before God. Thus it might appear that Luther conceives of a two-fold justification: 1) in the beginning when God justifies the sinner and 2) the acknowledgement by God in the last judgement that this man has become actually righteous. But this is not the case, for Luther always speaks of one and the same verdict of justification.²⁵

Luther does not speak of a two-fold justification, since for him God's declaration or verdict that man is righteous and His purpose to renew man do not follow in chronological sequence but coincide simultaneously. In fact, God's purpose to renew man is the reason why God can declare the sinner just. For example, Luther compares God with the good Samaritan (or, at times, with the innkeeper). Like the Samaritan, God takes charge of the sinner in order to heal him. "Sicut homo semivivus traditus stabulario indicat, qui alligatis vulneribus non sanus, sed curandus susceptus est."²⁶ "Deus illum assumpsit perficiendum et sanandum, sicut Samaritanus

²⁵Ibid., p. 122.

²⁶II 94, 21.

semivivum relictum."²⁷ By positing such a relationship between God's verdict of justification and His positive will to remake man Luther obviates the most serious objection that could be raised against his doctrine of justification--that it violates God's holiness. So for Luther God's grace and His righteousness do not contradict each other. Rather, God's grace is the means by which His righteousness accomplishes its goal. In fact, God's grace and His righteousness are ultimately one and the same.²⁸ Finally, Luther sees the renewal of man as already completed for God in the moment that He declares the sinner righteous, for God is timeless.²⁹

Holl is now ready to point to the solution of the apparent contradiction in Luther's doctrine of justification. In II 106, 3 ff. Luther again compares the sinner with an

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 122-3; II 332, 20 ff. That Luther maintained this purpose of God in justification all his life Holl shows by giving a number of quotations, one of them from Luther's disputations: "Haec imputatio non est res nihili, sed maior est, quam totus orbis, et omnes sancti angeli [d.h., sie ist eine wirksame Kraft] [Holl] ... Misericordia enim dei ignoscens est charitas remittens interim, et accipit deus peccatum realiter sic, ut non maneat peccatum, quia materialiter incipit purgari et totaliter remitti." Paul Drews, Disputationen Dr. Martin Luthers: in d. J. 1535-1545 an der Universität Wittenberg gehalten (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), p. 49, quoted by Holl, op. cit., p. 123, n. 1.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 123. Holl remarks: "Einheitlicher und tiefer ist der Gottesbegriff nie gefasst worden, als es hier bei Luther der Fall ist."

²⁹ Ibid., p. 124, n. 1; II 141, 5 ff: "Cum infirmi essemus secundum tempus, licet iam coram deo essemus in predestinatione iusti. Quia in predestinatione dei omnia facta iam sunt, quo in rebus adhuc futura sunt."

ailing man whom God, the physician, picks up. But says Luther, the sick man whom God has taken charge of is at the same time ill and well, which seems contradictory enough.

Then he adds:

Egrotus in rei veritate, sed sanus ex certa promissione medici, cui credit, qui eum iam velut sanum reputat, quia certus quod sanabit eum, quia incepit eum sanare nec imputavit ei egritudinem ad mortem. Eodem modo Samaritanus noster Christus hominem semivivum egrotum suum curandum suscepit in stabulum et incepit sanare promissa perfectissima sanitate in vitam eternam, et non imputans peccatum i.e. concupiscentias ad mortem.³⁰

Thus Luther states that as far as God is concerned the sick man is already well because God knows that He will be able to heal him. This self-assurance of God enables Him to forgive the sinner his guilt.³¹ Therefore Luther can say that God justifies the sinner ("synthetic" verdict of justification) and also that He justifies the righteous man ("analytic"

³⁰ II 108, 3 ff. Identical with Weimarer Ausgabe (henceforth abbreviated as WA) LVI, 402, 8 ff. In a footnote Holl, op. cit., p. 124, n. 2 quotes WA, VII, 109, 26 ff. as another testimonial from Luther's "early period" to demonstrate that Luther was consistent in this teaching: "Interim favor dei nos suscipit et sustinet, non imputans ad mortem quod reliquum est peccati in nobis, licet vere peccatum sit et imputari possit, donec efficiamur perfecte nova creatura; ad finem enim purgationis patris misericordia respicit, propter quam intermediis peccati immunditias statuit misericorditer ignoscere, donec penitus aboleantur." According to Holl the following conclusions are unmistakably stated in these words: 1) God's verdict of justification is conditioned by the goal He has in mind; 2) this verdict represents a decision, an act of will in God, the basis for which is the "cleansing" of man, which He foresees.

³¹ Holl remarks: "If God were not able to renew man, He could not forgive him," ibid., p. 125.

verdict of justification).³² But according to Holl, the latter phrase reproduces Luther's thought more exactly.³³

The fact that in Romans Luther teaches an analytic verdict of justification on God's part is further proved by the number of places in which he states that God forgives man "for the sake of faith."³⁴ In fact, Luther can even speak of perfectus iustificationis,³⁵ a iustificari magis et magis or adhuc,³⁶ of a crescere of gratia. These terms do not, however, denote an increased infusion of grace but a deeper

³²It is clear that this terminology, taken from Albrecht Ritschl, means that God declares as righteous the man who actually is righteous; i.e., God foresees that the man actually will be righteous. This future condition of man is already present for the timeless God. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Albrecht Ritschl believed that Luther taught a synthetic verdict of justification on God's part (so Otto Ritschl, Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1912), II-1, 117, n. 1.

³³Holl, op. cit., pp. 124-5.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 126-7; II 105, 20 f: "Ergo sibi ipsis et in veritate iniusti sunt, deo autem propter hanc confessionem peccati eos reputanti, iusti." II 118, 30 f: "Per nominationem dei propter humilitatem et gemitum fidei." II 66, 4 ff: "Iustificatio dei passiva et activa et fides seu credulitas in ipsum sunt idem. Quia quod nos eius sermones iustificamus, donum ipsius eius, ac propter idem donum ipse nos iustos habet i.e. iustificat." According to Holl the expressions "propter fidem, propter confessionem, propter humilitatem" are on the same level with "propter inceptam curationem," since God, who Himself has worked in man the gifts of faith, humility, and contrition, looks upon them as being already perfected and thus can forgive the sins which remain.

³⁵II 95, 10.

³⁶I 45, 23.

understanding of God and a strengthening of the relationship to Him.³⁷

Holl sums up his argument thus: the fact that God creates fellowship with the sinner is a deed of free grace at which man can only wonder. But God can do so without violating His holiness, since the fact that God has put man into fellowship with Himself enable Him to recreate man perfectly.³⁸

According to Holl, Melanchthon perverted Luther's doctrine of justification. For Melanchthon did not consider the new life of the justified sinner as the continuing work of God. He did not establish an inner connection between the new life and the verdict of justification, and he thus denied the all-sufficiency of God. Neither did Melanchthon consider faith as the work of God; he rather made faith a merit. Why does God not impute the merit of Christ to all men? Because only some men believe. Thus man's own work, his faith, becomes the reason why God can forgive the man with faith.³⁹

The second part of Holl's essay, which treats of justification in Luther's Romans as the experience of man, does not concern us directly. But we shall give an overview of it. In this portion of the essay Holl directs himself to

³⁷Holl, op. cit., pp. 127-8.

³⁸Ibid., p. 128.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 128-9.

answering the question raised by Loofs and Ficker as to whether Luther's Romans teaches the possibility of obtaining certainty of salvation.

There can be no doubt that Luther teaches in Romans the personal assurance of justification or of the forgiveness of sins. The believer must have this personal assurance. "Tantum habemus, quantum credimus et speramus".⁴⁰ But is this assurance of justification identical with "assurance of salvation?" Actually for Luther the assurance of salvation includes 1) the assurance of arriving at ethical perfection; 2) the assurance of gaining eternal life. To be sure, when one submits himself to God's verdict of judgement and justification, he is inwardly changed. He finds himself in a new relationship to God in which he loves God. This relationship is capable of an endless development. But Luther also states that the certainty of justification must always be held in a certain tension by the believer. For he stresses that the old evil nature continues to be a part of the Christian. The essence of this evil nature is self-seeking, which in its most pious moments tries to use God as a tool for its own purposes.

Since this is so, the new life of the believer cannot be the basis of the believer's assurance of justification. If a man relies on his own feelings and motives, he cannot be

⁴⁰WA, III, 180, 26; Ibid., p. 134, n. 3.

certain of forgiveness. All of the passages which Loofs and Ficker cite⁴¹ to prove that Luther did not teach the possibility of the assurance of salvation in Romans have this meaning and only this meaning.⁴² Everywhere Luther opposes himself to that type of assurance of salvation which is based upon the actual righteousness which the believer has attained. Luther says that not even St. Paul considered himself justified, that is actually righteous before God, even though he was conscious of no sin.⁴³ Therefore man must trust in the righteousness which he finds in God's gracious will, and he must believe that he will attain his own actual righteousness in the future. So the believer must be in a continuous state of repentance, even when he is aware of no sin. He must constantly place himself beneath the two dialectically related verdicts of God. He is to consider himself both peccator and iustus.⁴⁴

But does this process cause the believer to reach a real certainty of salvation? Luther speaks of the "royal road" between fear and hope which the Christian is to follow and by which he is to avoid both smug complacency and despair. He

⁴¹See supra, p. 31.

⁴²Holl, op. cit., p. 140.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 140-1; II 69, 9; II 89, 13: "Nihil mihi conscius sum, sed non in hoc iustificatus sum."

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 144.

is to hope exclusively in God's mercy to the end that he may attain a complete union of his will with God's (for this is true salvation),⁴⁵ not that he might gain his own summum bonum. The believer is to fear the judgement of God; together with this fear the believer mistrusts himself and all his own doing. But at the same time he is to look upon himself as completely well and healed.⁴⁶

At this point Luther raises the question of the possibility of gaining the certainty of election. In Romans, he says, in general, that certainty of election can be known only by a special revelation.⁴⁷ When he comes to the exposition of the passages in Romans which treat of election, he places certainty of election on two levels. He encourages those who are troubled by doubts because of their election to believe firmly that God has elected them: whoever can firmly believe that he is elect is really predestinated. This advice, however, is given only to the weak Christians. Of the strong Christians Luther demanded that they earnestly consider the possibility of belonging to the reprobate.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 146, n. 2; II 217, 23: "Hoc autem sapiunt, quia nesciunt, quid sit beatum et salvum esse, nisi sc. voluptari et bene habere secundum phantasiam suam. Cum sit hoc esse beatum, voluntatem dei et gloriam eius in omnibus velle et suum nihil optare, neque hic neque in futuro."

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 146; II 108, 3: "Sanus ex certa promissione medici cui credit." II 176, 16: "Inchoativo et in spe sani."

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 148; I 81, 19.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 149.

If this should be God's will, then the strong Christian should resign himself to it, for this constitutes ultimate and complete love to God. But when Luther considers the possibility of being rejected, he cannot follow his thought to its ultimate conclusion.⁴⁹ To those who could wish to be damned according to God's will, hell would no more be hell; for even in hell they would be united with the will of God.⁵⁰ So, says Holl, Luther is forced against his will to teach the certainty of salvation.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 152; II 223, 14: "Si enim vellent, quod vult deus, etiamsi damnatos et reprobatos vellet, non haberent malum; quia vellent, quod vult deus, et haberent in se voluntatem dei per patientiam."

CHAPTER III

HOLL'S INTERPRETATION IN CONTROVERSY BETWEEN WALTHER AND HOLL

Wilhelm Walther of Rostock entered a vigorous protest against Holl's interpretation of Luther's doctrine of Justification and thus began a controversy which has provoked discussion in theological circles the world over.

In his first article against Holl,¹ Walther takes issue with Holl's interpretation of the critical passages from Luther noted in the previous chapter, notably Roomerbrieff II, 108, 3 ff.² and WA VII, 109, 26 ff., which Walther considers the only passages that actually seem to uphold Holl's thesis. According to Walther, Holl's view that in II, 108, 3 ff. Luther posits justification as an analytic judgement of God depends upon the use of quia, which Holl himself underlines. Walther, however, maintains that Luther uses this quia only in his analogy of the good Samaritan and the sick man. But when Luther applies the analogy to Christ he omits the words "quia certus quod sanabit eum, quia incepit eum sanare nec

¹Wilhelm Walther, "Neue Konstruktionen der Rechtfertigungslehre Luthers," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XXXIV (January, 1923), 50-64. In this article Walther also subjects Reinhold Seeberg's interpretation of Luther's doctrine of justification to criticism.

²Weimarer Ausgabe (henceforth abbreviated as WA), LVI, 272-3.

imputavit ei iniquitatem ad mortem." In other words, the question as to why the doctor already considers the patient well does not belong to the tertium comparationis. The actual comparison is this: just as the doctor considers the patient well, so God considers and declares the sinner righteous.³

In the second place, Holl interprets the whole passage as descriptive of the initial acceptance of the sinner by God.⁴ But actually the passage speaks of the condition of the sick man whom the doctor has already begun to heal.⁵ In this passage Luther seeks to comfort justified sinners who are concerned because of the sin that still remains with them. They have the promise that God will one day completely remove their sinfulness and that until then he does not count this sin against them. Therefore this passage does establish a conception of justification which "leads back to a concept of God resting on an ethical basis." That Luther is here speaking of justification from the viewpoint of man is proved by the initial words of the quotation in question.⁶

³Walther, op. cit., p. 52.

⁴Of the "Augenblick der Rechtfertigung."

⁵Walther, op. cit., p. 53: "Incepit eum sanare."

⁶Ibid., "Es ist ähnlich wie mit dem Kranken, der dem Arzt, welcher ihm aufs bestimmteste Gesundheit verspricht, Glaubenschenkt....Er ist krank in Wirklichkeit, aber gesund nach dem sicheren Versprechen des Arztes, dem er glaubt, der ihn schon wie einen Gesunden beurteilt."

Likewise the passage WA V, 109, 26 ff., quoted by Holl to show that the previous section from Romans is not an unicum, does not speak of the moment in which the sinner is justified but of those "who are in Christ Jesus and walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."⁷ In reality this passage also asserts that God does not impute the sins of the saints in this life. Luther says that God in His mercy looks forward to the aim and purpose of the cleansing process already begun in the saints and has decided, in order to attain this aim and purpose, to forgive the sin that remains until that time. In addition Luther in this passage supplied the ground on which God can forgive the person who has already been justified: "Weil sie durch den Glauben in Christo Jesu sind, quo mediatore eis ignoscitur" and "weil sie invitā habent peccatum in se, daher Gott sie pro non habentibus habet, non tamen nisi gratuita misericordia." Therefore Holl's interpretation overlooks the full import of the quotation.⁸

Walther now answers what he considers to be the most untenable points in Holl's chain of reasoning. Holl stated that the aim or goal which God pursues in justifying the sinner is moral perfection: "Gerechtsprechung" is thus the means, "Gerechtmachung" the goal. Walther proposes that God's goal in justifying the sinner is that the sinner partake of

⁷Ibid., p. 54. These words of Rom. 8:1 are quoted by Luther immediately following the end of Holl's quotation.

⁸Ibid.

complete fellowship with Himself; thus "Gerechtmachung" is not the end but the means to the attainment of absolute communion with God, for the sin which still inheres in the saints in this life interrupts and mars their communion with God.⁹

Furthermore, Holl's interpretation contradicts Luther's teaching of election. If God declares man just because He in the future will actually make him just, then everyone whom God justifies must reach the completion of God's work. Thus everyone who knows that he now has salvation through forgiveness must be certain also of his election. But Holl rightly sees that for Luther certainty of election is not equivalent to certainty of salvation. Holl's view that God justifies man because He knows that He will perfect him can be harmonized only with the Reformed teaching that only those who do actually attain eternal blessedness are justified.¹⁰

Perhaps the most serious objection which Walther raises to Holl's "reconstruction" of Luther's doctrine of justification is that it detracts from the work of Christ as Luther develops it in his teaching on justification. According to

⁹Ibid., p. 55, Walther utilizes a quotation from Luther to prove his point: whatever is necessary to the attainment of complete fruition of this communion with God, "alles, wodurch unsere [durch die Rechtfertigung geschaffene] Seligkeit vollendet wird, folgt sobald mit dem Hauptstück der Erlösung, der Vergebung der Sünden," Erlanger Ausgabe (henceforth abbreviated as EA), IX, 370. Walther adds the words in brackets.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 55-56.

Walther, Luther could never mention justification without alluding to the propter Christum in the sense that "niemand wird gerecht, selig, noch von Sünden los, denn allein dadurch, dass Jesus Christus gelitten hat, gestorben und vom Tod wiederauferstanden ist. Dieser Gang macht gerecht und sonst nichts."¹¹ When Holl says that God does not ignore moral requirements in forgiving, he is correct, but the moral requirement is satisfied in the satisfactio vicaria of Christ grasped by faith. According to Walther, Luther would not have refused to say even this: if it were not possible for God to make the sinner completely righteous, He nevertheless could establish and maintain fellowship with the sinner for the sake of Jesus Christ by continuing to forgive him the sin that still remains. Even then God's love would remain holy.¹²

Walther claims that Holl's fundamental weakness is his failure to distinguish clearly between the "first moment" of justification and that ongoing forgiveness of the justified sinner which comforts and strengthens him in the midst of his struggle against sin.¹³ He admits that Luther as a rule did not distinguish between these two categories of forgiveness, not because he wanted to identify the two but in order to refute the error that everything necessary to eternal life is

¹¹ EA, II, 256, quoted literally by Walther.

¹² Walther, op. cit., p. 56.

¹³ Ibid., p. 61: this is also Seeberg's fundamental weakness, says Walther.

attained in the "first moment" of forgiveness.¹⁴

Holl and Seeberg, Walther admits, can correctly point to a difference between Luther's and Melancthon's formulations of the doctrine of justification. Melancthon had pedagogical reasons for describing the justification which occurs in the "first moment" as different from moral renovation and making the latter follow upon the former.¹⁵ But Luther experienced both forgiveness and renovation as an indivisible unity, even when for various reasons he isolated the two as precisely as Melancthon. Luther could express iustificare as both iustum reputare and iustum officere, or he could employ either designation. Walther cautions that it is rather easy to evaluate Luther's earliest writing in such a way as to falsify his actual views. As it became clearer to Luther that his teaching of justification differed from that of the Roman Church, he tended more and more to limit iustificare to non imputare peccatum, since he was convinced that the forgiveness of sins effects and brings with it renovation, life, and salvation. On the other hand, since Melancthon's purpose was to comfort troubled consciences, he consistently brought to the fore the strictly forensic and imputative view.¹⁶ Walther mildly criticizes Melancthon for placing

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁶ Ibid.

renovation alongside of forgiveness, thus making it appear that one can be satisfied with having only "justification" and not "sanctification." Thus Melancthon obscured the important truth that one cannot really have forgiveness if he thinks that he has it only. However, in Walther's judgement Melancthon's presentation of justification in the Lutheran Confessions does not differ from Luther's.¹⁷

Therefore Holl misses the mark when he asserts that Melancthon "perverted" Luther's doctrine of justification because he did not conceive of the entire new life as the goal toward which God is striving in justification. But Luther does not regard God's goal as one to be reached in a new life in the future, but as present already in justification: "Also habe ich oft gesagt: Ein Christen mensch hat durch seine Taufe und Glauben schon all Dinge und wird ihm gegeben alles auf einmal; ohne dass er es noch nicht aufgedeckt sieht."¹⁸

As to Holl's objection that Melancthon's teaching of imputation necessarily gives to faith the character of a merit, Walther replies that Melancthon certainly did not wish to portray faith as a merit. Furthermore, this objection certainly does not apply to the Augustana and the Apology.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, EA, VII, 292.

¹⁹ For quotations from the Apology and the Formula of Concord, see *ibid.*, p. 64.

The fact that the imputation depends on faith does not make faith a merit. Even Luther, who excluded every conception of merit from faith, wrote: "Magna res est, fide apprehendere Christum portantem peccata mundi. Qui inventus est hac fiducia apprehensi Christi in corde, illum reputat Deus iustum. Haec est ratio et meritum, quo pervenimus ad remissionem peccatorum et iustitiam."²⁰

Two months later Holl replied to Walther's objections in an extensive article.²¹ Holl begins by reviewing and summarizing the main aspects of his understanding of Luther's doctrine of justification. Seen from the viewpoint of God, justification is analytical in that it is to be understood in the context of the goal of perfection which God wills to attain and actually does attain by his verdict of justification.²² Thus God's judgement of justification is true; it contains no self-deception on God's part.²³ On the other hand, the justified sinner as he looks at himself can perceive nothing but sin. He can therefore base his confidence

²⁰ EA, Gal. 1, 195. "Sola imputatione gratuita sumus iusti apud Deum," EA, LVIII, 348.

²¹ Karl Holl, "Zur Verständigung über Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XXXIV (March, 1923), 164-83.

²² Ibid., p. 165.

²³ Ibid., p. 166.

toward God only on God's free mercy which forgives him and draws him into fellowship.²⁴

Even though Walther claims that Roemerbrief II 103, 8 ff. is written from the viewpoint of man, the fact that God's will and intention are given as the basis for the justification of the sick man proves conclusively that Luther wrote this passage from the viewpoint of God.²⁵ To the objection that the words quia certus quod sanabit eum do not belong to the tortium comparationis and are not repeated by Luther when he applies the analogy to the real situation, Holl replies first that Luther does not write in the fashion of a schoolmaster and can leave it to the intelligence and imagination of his reader to supply for the apodosis what he has written in the protasis. Secondly, the distinction between the analogy and the real situation is not clearly drawn. It would be impossible to find a human doctor who would not "reckon" the sickness of a patient as a sickness unto death or who would be sure that he could heal a patient simply because he had taken him under treatment. Thus it is clear that Luther sees God behind the form of the doctor.²⁶

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Holl points out the words: "Qui medicus, later applied to Deus eum velut sanum reputat, quia certus, quod sanabit eum, quia incepit eum sanare..." Thus Luther bases man's hope on the act of God according to God's own inner intention, says Holl, (ibid., 167-8).

²⁶Ibid., pp. 168-9.

Contrary to Walther, Holl sees in WA VII, 109, 26 ff. the clear statement that justification, an act of God's will (statuit ignoscere), is possible because of God's certainty that He can renew a man (propter quem...statuit ignoscere). Walther had further objected that Luther's quotation of Rom. 8:1 in the context states the reason why God can forgive the believers. Holl replies that the reasons why God can forgive are brought out clearly enough in the exact words quoted by him that, in other words, it is not necessary to go to the context. To say that God forgives the Christians because they are in Christ Jesus and do not walk according to the flesh is therefore the same as to say that God forgives them because He sees the result of His action (moral perfection) as already completed, for it is God who has caused the Christians to be in Christ Jesus and not to walk according to the flesh. Or it could be said that the second weil in this passage²⁷ is parallel to the second quia²⁸ in the passage from Romans.²⁹

Holl replies furthermore that the distinction between the justification of the "first moment" and the continuous justification of the saints belongs to orthodox dogmatics, but cannot be substantiated in Luther at all. On the

²⁷"Weil sie in Christo Jesu sind."

²⁸"Quia inceptit sanare."

²⁹Holl, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

contrary, Luther considers each sin a mortal sin. So man discovers daily that he begins to be justified all over again and that he is in the same condition in which he found himself when he first became a Christian.³⁰

To Walther's objection that Holl's view does not harmonize with Luther's teaching on election, Holl replies with a remark in a footnote.³¹ Since the certainty of election is a concern of man it is a matter entirely different from justification as the deed of God. Holl is pleased to note that Walther must concede that he (Holl) has correctly presented Luther's teaching concerning the possibility of possessing a certainty of election. Holl remarks that Luther in his later years passes over the question of election for all practical purposes.

Since Walther has intimated that such expressions or formulations concerning justification as occur in Romans are not to be found in Luther's later writings, Holl essays to prove just the opposite by giving quite a number of quotations from Luther's larger commentary on Galatians of 1531³² and from his disputations³³ which took place toward the end of Luther's life. It is interesting to note that in 1531

³⁰Ibid., pp. 171-2.

³¹Ibid., p. 172, n. 1.

³²WA, XL, 1.

³³Drews, Disputationen Dr. Martin Luthers (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895).

Luther was still stressing the passage, "Factores legis iustificabuntur" in his lectures on Galatians.³⁴ In theses 63-65³⁵ Luther emphasizes the fact that God wants His law to be kept.³⁶ Luther says that man could not endure the majesty of God in eternity if he himself were not holy.³⁷ This holiness does not merely consist in leading a flawless moral life or in accumulating a store of good works, but it means spontaneous obedience exercised in ever-deepening communion with God, prayer, praise, and love of neighbor.³⁸ Imputatio is the dynamic which produces faith; with faith the actual righteousness in man begins.³⁹ In fact, according to Holl, Luther never distinguishes⁴⁰ between justificatio and regeneratio.⁴¹

³⁴WA, XL, 1, 397, 7 ff: "Sic nos docemus Ro. 2 'factores' et qui operatur secundum legem damnatur. Articulus noster dicit: 'quidquid est contra fidem Abraham est maledictum' et tamen [italics by Holl] justificatio legis debet in nobis [4] [italics and exclamation point by Holl] impleri. Si impleveris non impleveris; si non impleveris, impleveris." See Chap. IV, p. 82 of this thesis.

³⁵Drews, op. cit.: "Deus serio vult legem suam impleri, usque ad minimum apicem et iota; aut nullum omnino salvari," Thesis 65, p. 17. See Chap. IV, pp. 78-80.

³⁶Holl, op. cit., p. 173, n. 1.

³⁷Ibid., n. 2-3.

³⁸Ibid., p. 174, n. 1.

³⁹Ibid., n. 2-3.

⁴⁰"As even the Formula of Concord does."

⁴¹Holl, op. cit., p. 175, n. 2.

He names the whole process justificatio or also less frequently regeneratio. When he wishes to express accurately the relationship between Gerechtsprechung and Gerechtmachung, he calls the former "incompleted" justificatio, the latter "completed."⁴² Of course, for Luther the "real" justification occurs only in the final judgement, in which God declares righteous those who are in reality righteous.⁴³ But the justification in this life must be one and the same with that which occurs in the final judgement; otherwise the two would be contradictory. Therefore the justification in this life as well as in the future must have the analytical meaning. But since man in this life is a sinner, the judgement of justification pronounced in this life can be executed only in view of what man will be in the future: "Non dicitur sc. justus ab operibus factis, sed ab operibus faciendis."⁴⁴

As seen above, Walther charges that Holl misrepresents Luther's emphasis upon the work of Christ. Holl admits that Luther viewed Christ's death as an expiatory, substitutionary suffering of punishment which overcame God's wrath.⁴⁵ But Luther also teaches that the risen Christ rises again in the believers, in whom He works an actual righteousness by

⁴²Ibid., n. 3.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 175-6, n. 1.

⁴⁴Ibid., WA, XL, 1, 402, 3.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 176-7.

recreating them in His own image.⁴⁶ But since Christ never fully rises in the believer in this life, the Christian constantly needs the reputatio of God.⁴⁷ Christ with His sanctifying power is the surety before God that the believers will attain actual holiness. Furthermore, as Luther conceives of it, God's gracious will to forgive caused Him to send Christ and not vice versa.⁴⁸ The final cause of justification is God's free mercy.⁴⁹ Christ's work is the means by which this end is accomplished.⁵⁰ Another fact reveals the subordination of the work of Christ in Luther's view: Luther gives Christ's work only a temporal significance. If the meaning of Christ is that He perfects the believers in His image, it follows that His work⁵¹ will terminate when the goal is attained.⁵² Then the believers will have no more need of Christ.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 177-8, n. 4, Holl quotes a beautiful passage from Drows, op. cit., p. 357, in which Luther speaks of Christ's renovating power.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 178, n. 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 178.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 179, n. 1; Drows, op. cit., p. 141. "Causa formalis iustificationis et salutis nostrae est miseratio, imputatio et acceptatio divina."

⁵⁰ Drows, op. cit., p. 10, Thesis 14.

⁵¹ "Dienst".

⁵² Holl, op. cit., pp. 179-80.

Holl sees the final mystery⁵³ of the doctrine of justification in God's free will, which goes forth and enters into fellowship with sinners. The Gospel thus seems to rest on an immoral basis.⁵⁴ But actually it is the Gospel alone which calls forth true morality. God can forgive because He can lead men back to communion with Himself by means of forgiveness and recreate them.⁵⁵

Holl takes note of Walther's charge that this view of Luther's doctrine of justification is not to be found in the Lutheran Confessions. Holl replies: "I was aware of that fact already when I wrote my essay."⁵⁶ Holl now repeats his charges against Melancthon's doctrine of justification: he did not view justification as a "deed of God" in the manner which Luther held; by his teaching of the "imputation of Christ's righteousness" Melancthon presented justification only as "trost" for the conscience and moved outside the circle of thought concerning the relationship to Christ and and the new creation in Christ; therefore justification for

⁵³"Rätsel".

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 180.

⁵⁵Drews, op. cit., p. 49: "Misericordia enim dei ignoscens est charitas remittens interim...quia [*italics by Holl*] materialiter incipit purgari et totaliter remitti." Holl strongly emphasizes that the troublesome quia which is so offensive to Walther always turns up again and again. At the end of this quotation Holl remarks: "Die volle Vergebung tritt also ein, wenn das Ziel erreicht ist!" (Holl, op. cit., p. 181, n. 2.).

⁵⁶The year 1910. (Ibid., p. 181).

Melanchthon, seen as a "deed of God," tends to charge God with a piece of self-deception: God treats the sinner as if he were righteous only because He looks at him in Christ. Thus faith becomes a merit, and the connection between faith and the new life is made even vaguer.⁵⁷ Holl further claims that Luther's imputatio is different from Melanchthon's imputatio iustitiae Christi. For Luther says that God imputes to a man that faith which He Himself has worked. He "imputes" faith, although it is still no actual righteousness, but this righteousness will grow out of faith.⁵⁸

Finally, Holl seems to be indignant at Walther's pettiness because Walther has managed to "dig out" [sic!] a passage from the large commentary on Galatians in which Luther calls faith a merit. The fact that Walther had quoted this passage from the Erlangen Edition of Luther's works makes Holl requote it from the WA, which Holl says is Veit Dietrich's transcript of Luther's lectures, and which also occasions Holl to direct the "urgent request" ("dringende Bitte") to Walther that he use only those texts for which Luther is responsible, implying that version of the passage in the

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 181-3.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 182, n. 1.

Erlangen edition is questionable, to say the least.⁵⁹ Holl answers in effect: "So what?" Luther could call faith a meritum in this passage because he had no need to fear misunderstanding. But it is indeed significant that Melancthon should be forced against his will to make statements which in effect make of faith a merit.⁶⁰

Holl end his rebuttal by stating that Luther is of more value to him than the confessions, since Luther comes closer to the New Testament.⁶¹

Walther could not remain silent to such a reply, especially since in it Holl expresses considerable personal rancor. He launched forth against Holl again in November of the same year. Walther begins by asking which religious interests are satisfied by Holl's interpretation of Luther's doctrine of justification.⁶² The standard criticism of the Lutheran doctrine of justification expressed by Roman Catholics

⁵⁹This "dringende Bitte" of Holl must have become celebrated, for eight years later Elert remarks in a footnote: "Holl, der seinerzeit dem greisen Wilh. Walther so schwer ankreidete, dass er immer noch die Erlanger Ausgabe benutze, folgt hier offenbar gegen seine Gewohnheit kritiklos einer Überlieferung, die durch die älteren Lutherausgaben entstanden ist..." (Werner Elert, Morphologie des Luthertums (München: C. H. Bock'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1931), I, 151-2, n. 1.)

⁶⁰Holl, op. cit., pp. 182-3, n. 3.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 183.

⁶²Wilhelm Walther, "Noch ein Wort zu Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XXXIV (November, 1923), 668-75.

is that it does violence to the moral consciousness of God and man. This objection would of course cease to be valid if Holl's thesis were correct. Such a doctrine of justification would therefore satisfy the religious interest in the truthfulness and holiness of God. But Walther's principal objection to Holl's thesis is that it perverts the religious concern expressed in the teaching of justification by grace for Christ's sake.⁶³

According to Walther, Holl in his original essay cites only two passages to prove the bone of his contention. Walther does not seek to carry on the discussion of these passages any further, since he feels that the facts about them should be clear by now. Among all the passages which Holl quotes from the large commentary on Galatians and Luther's disputations in his second essay, he fails to find a single one which clearly and simply states the fact that God can justify the sinner because He will make him completely righteous in the future. Only by drawing conclusions from some of Luther's statements can Holl interpret Luther's pronouncements in this manner. Nevertheless, such a thought is so clear that if Luther really had held it he would have expressed it "ganz nackt und klar" as often as he had insisted on the propter Christum.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 668-9, he quotes Luther as saying in reference to the Romanist objection: "Sie haben Christum nie recht erkannt; sie haben Christo seine Ehre geraubt."

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 669.

It is true that the words of St. Paul in Romans, "Factores legis iustificabuntur," were of great meaning to Luther all his life. But Holl is not correct when from this patent fact he concludes that God's verdict of justification is an anticipation of what will be a reality on the last day. Upon reading the words "Iustificatio legis debet in nobis impleri," which Holl quotes to substantiate his position, one would expect to find Luther stating that the law will be fulfilled by us perfectly only in eternity and that God can declare us righteous in this life by looking ahead to the righteousness which will be ours completely in eternity. But actually Luther says that the law is fulfilled in this life.⁶⁵ Therefore this quotation does not bear out Holl's conclusion. While it is true that Theses 63-65 quoted by Holl state that God really desires His law to be fulfilled and that only those will enter the kingdom of heaven who are in reality factores legis, one would expect, if Holl's thesis were correct, that Luther should say that a man becomes a true factor legis only in eternity. But Luther says: no saint keeps God's commandments;⁶⁶ the law is fulfilled by the Mediator between God and man (Th. 74);⁶⁷ through the obedience

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 670; WA, XL, 1, 402, 1 ff: "Das ist verus factor, qui accipit spiritum sanctum per fidem Christi incipit diligere Deum et bona opera, quia fides facit arborem, postea fiunt fructus."

⁶⁶ Thesis 69.

⁶⁷ Thesis 74.

of this one Man many come to be considered just.⁶⁸

The only passage which on the surface seems to substantiate Holl's contention is WA XL, 1, 402, 8.⁶⁹ Holl understands these words to mean that if God declares man just He can do so because he looks ahead to the righteousness which He will work in him and which will be perfected in eternity. Walther now raises a question as to the validity of this quotation as Holl has given it. According to Walther the Latin text of Luther's large commentary on Galatians as found in WA XL is the transcript of Luther's oral lectures found in a student notebook. The writer of these notes had written down the word dicitur incompletely. When he put the notes into print he enlarged on the thought behind dicitur with the word factor, not iustus, as Holl has it. Who is correct? Holl regards the reading which he gives as unassailable, since he states that he takes the text from Veit Dietrich's notebook.⁷⁰

It is important to note Holl's remark that Veit Dietrich often emasculated Luther's spoken words by interpolating Melancthonian concepts into his transcripts. Walther agrees that Dietrich was a most unreliable editor, whose integrity

⁶⁸Thesis 79. (Walther, op. cit., pp. 670-1.)

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 671. Walther says that even Holl seems to indicate that it is his only convincing proof by introducing it as his last quotation with the words: "So spricht Luther es aber auch mit runden Worten aus."

⁷⁰And thereby takes the opportunity to direct his "dringende Bitte" to Walther.

in any given transcription is to be doubted. But Holl is mistaken in saying that the WA utilized Veit Dietrich's notebook, for the WA expressly gives the transcription of Georg Roerer.⁷¹ Walther intimates that Holl, under the assumption that the WA was using Veit Dietrich's notebook, has evidently changed the reading factor to iustus and thus has done his part to "demelanchthonize" the supposed reading of Dietrich. But the fact that an undoubtedly reliable editor, Roerer, supplied factor undoubtedly makes this reading the correct one.⁷²

The passage in question deals with the identity of the factores legis. Luther has explained that man cannot keep God's law without faith in Christ.⁷³ Whoever believes in Christ is already called a doer of the law even before he has fulfilled the law, because he will do it. The factor legis is the believer in Christ, who will do good works: dicitur factor non ab operibus factis, sed a faciendis.⁷⁴ Walther answers Holl's reiteration that Melancthon completely

⁷¹ Walther, op. cit., p. 672: "Whose zealous striving always to render Luther absolutely true is known by every Luther scholar." Even the editor of the WA, XL, 1, admits this.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 671-3.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 673. "Das ist verus factor, qui accipit spiritum sanctum...quia fides facit arborem, postea fiunt fructus."

⁷⁴ Ibid.

changed Luther's doctrine of justification with an argument from silence. The fact that Luther never expressed disagreement with Melancthon's pronouncements on justification proves that there was none in fact, for Luther's character would not have allowed him to remain silent had such been the case. Actually Luther had high praise for the Augustana and the Apology of Melancthon, in which he discusses justification at length.⁷⁵

How, then, does Luther vindicate the holiness and truthfulness of God? Holl thinks that Luther upholds it by his insistence on viewing justification as a deed of God in which God anticipates what man will become. According to Holl, the religious concern about the certainty of salvation is preserved in the fact that the Christians look only to the free mercy and forgiveness of God. But Walther maintains, Luther actually satisfies this double religious interest through his constant emphasis on the propter Christum.⁷⁶

In a final short statement of two pages⁷⁷ Holl sums up concisely what appear to him the chief points in dispute between himself and Walther. He believes that it is necessary

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 674.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 674-5. Walther closes the discussion with a rather lengthy quotation of EA, VII, 186 ff. which, he means to maintain, proves the centrality of the propter Christum in Luther's thinking.

⁷⁷Karl Holl, "Das Ergebnis der Auseinandersetzung über die Rechtfertigungslehre," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XXXV (January, 1924), 47-8.

to do so because in the opinion of both men the most important tenet of Protestantism is at stake. Walther's objection to Holl's thesis is that while it satisfies the demands of God's holiness and truthfulness it detracts from the centrality of justification for Christ's sake. Holl replies that this latter religious interest is satisfied⁷⁸ in his own presentation since the very fact that God deals with a sinner is pure grace, and this grace becomes even greater when God makes a completely righteous saint out of a wholly depraved worldling. But Holl cannot understand how Walther can do justice to the holiness and truthfulness of God with his mere insistence on the propter Christum.

For Walther the work of Christ consists only in Christ's fulfillment of the law and His stilling of God's wrath. But Holl thinks that one of Luther's marks of greatness is that he reestablished the Pauline unity of the death and resurrection of Christ; Christ is significant for God's verdict of justification also in that He renews man.⁷⁹ Walther concludes that Holl places the complete fulfillment of the law only in the future life, while according to Luther it clearly begins in this life. Holl replies that he states the former without denying the latter. But he stresses that man cannot perceive the beginning in this life. For Walther it is

⁷⁸"Bei mir voll zu seinem Recht kommt."

⁷⁹Holl, op. cit., p. 47.

unthinkable that there should have been a difference between Luther and Melancthon in the area of justification. Holl just as sharply maintains that the difference did exist; this is evident in the fact that Luther to the end used the formula propter fidem (which for him has a correct meaning) but that Melancthon was always opposed to it.⁸⁰

Holl's summation is concise and almost complete. I would add only two points: the difference between Holl and Walther in the interpretation of Luther's Christology is more profound than appears in Holl's explanation. For Walther, God's will to forgive, His grace, is coextensive and coterminous with the work of Christ. For Holl the work of Christ is definitely subordinate to God's will to forgive. Secondly, Holl posits that the initial justification, the renewed daily justification of the Christian, and God's final Anerkennung of man as righteous are one and the same action for Luther. Walther, on the other hand, believes that a definite distinction is to be made between the initial justification of the sinner and his renewed daily forgiveness by God.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 48.

CHAPTER IV

EXAMINATION OF THE CONTROVERTED PASSAGES FROM LUTHER

It is evident from the discussion in the preceding chapter that in order to arrive at some resolution of the issues at stake between Walther and Holl it will be necessary to make a rather thorough investigation of the chief passages from Luther in dispute between the two theologians.

The passage which seems to be the most controversial is the one from Luther's lecture on Romans of 1515-1516.¹ This passage, which is decisive for Holl, is taken from Luther's exposition of Romans 5:5-8: "Reputatur fides eius ad iustitiam, sicut et David dicit, beatitudinem hominis cui Deus reputat iustitiam sine operibus. Beati, quorum..." (Vulgate).

Luther remarks that the works denominated in sine operibus are those deeds by means of which one thinks to make himself righteous. God does not accept the person on account of the works, but the works on account of the person, as with Abel.² Actually the works of the unbelievers are similar to the works of the righteous people: the differentiating factor is the intention with which they are performed.³ The

¹Ficker II, 108, 3 ff. or Weimarer Ausgabe (henceforth abbreviated as WA), LVI, 272. We shall use WA, LVI.

²WA, LVI, 268, ll. 1-7.

³Ibid., ll. 7-10.

unbelievers are satisfied with their works and really believe that they are just and righteous. But the believers are not content with their deeds; they seek to have their heart cleansed from evil lusts.⁴ The iusti do not know when they are iusti, "quia ex Deo reputante Iusti tantummodo sunt, cuius reputationem nemo novit, Sed solum postulare et sperare debet." The "hypocrites" never believe that they are sinners; the iusti always know themselves to be sinners.⁵

Luther now produces a strange paradox: "Sancti Intrinsece sunt peccatores semper, ideo extrinsece Iustificantur semper.--Hypocrite autem intrinsece sunt Iusti semper, ideo extrinsece sunt peccatores semper."⁶ By intrinsece Luther means "as we are in our own opinion;" extrinsece means "as we are in God's reputatio."⁷ "Reputatio enim eius non in nobis nec in potestate nostra est. ergo nec Iustitia nostra in nobis est nec in potestate nostra."⁸ "Quia si solum Deo reputante sumus Iusti, ergo non nobis viventibus vel operantibus."⁹ Therefore God accounts just those who in themselves are only sinners. This fact Luther expresses in the most

⁴Ibid., 11. 11-18.

⁵Ibid., 11. 20-24.

⁶Ibid., 11. 27-30.

⁷Ibid., 11. 31-32.

⁸Ibid., p. 269, 11. 2-4.

⁹Ibid., 11. 8-9.

pointed manner possible: "Ergo sibiipsis et in veritate In-
iusti sunt, Deo autem propter hanc confessionem peccati eos
reputanti Iusti; Re vera peccatores, Sed reputatione mise-
rentis Dei Iusti; Ignoranter Iusti et Scienter iniusti; pec-
catores in re, Iusti autem in spe."¹⁰ And so Luther praises
the unspeakable mercy of God, who at the same time considers
us sinners and non-sinners. Simultaneously sin is present
and yet is not present.¹¹

The sins which remain in the believers Luther calls sins
de fomite:¹² the desire and the inclination to sin and the
declinatio from good. Experience teaches that this unity of
inclinatio-declinatio cannot be removed by attempting to do
good works; it only testifies that in whatever good we do
the trace of concupiscence remains.¹³ But the mercy of God
consists precisely in this, that God does not impute this fun-
damental concupiscence to those who call upon Him and yearn
for their liberation. In the meanwhile the Christians who
believe God's promise that He will free them from sin fight
against it so that it will not rule over them.¹⁴ Luther now
compares the justified sinner who is groaning for his

¹⁰ Ibid. 11. 27-30.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 270, 11. 9-11.

¹² Ibid., p. 271, 1. 2.

¹³ "Et nemo mundus ab illa, nec Infans unius diei," Ibid.,
11. 24-27.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 271, 1. 27-272, 1. 2.

liberation from sin with a convalescent man under the treatment of a physician. This comparison constitutes the passage in dispute, which we shall quote in full:

Est enim simile sicut cum egroto, qui promittenti medico certissimam sanitatem credit et precepto eius obediens interim in spe promissae sanitatis abstinet ab iis, quae prohibita sunt ei, ne promissam sanitatem impediat et morbum augeat, donec impleat medicus, quod promisit. Iste enim Aegrotus nunquid sanus est? Immo egrotus simul et sanus. Egrotus in rei veritate, Sed sanus ex certa promissione medici, cui credit, qui eum iam Velut sanus reputat, quia certus, quod sanabit eum, quia incepit eum sanare nec imputavit ei egritudinem ad mortem. Eodem modo Samaritanus noster Christus hominem semi-vivum egrotum suum curandum suscepit in stabulum et incepit sanare promissa perfectissima sanitate in vitam eternam, et non imputans peccatum i.e. concupiscentias ad mortem, Sed prohibens interim in spe promissae sanitatis facere et omittere, quibus sanitas illa impediat et peccatum i.e. concupiscentia augeatur. Nunquid ergo perfecte Iustus? Non, Sed simul peccator et Iustus; peccator re vera, Sed Iustus ex reputatione et promissione Dei certa, quod liberet ab illo, donec perfecte sanet. Ac per hoc sanus perfecte est in spe, In re autem peccator, Sed Initium habens Iustitiae, ut amplius querat semper, semper iniustum se sciens. Si nunc iste egrotus diligens infirmitatem nolit omne curare, nonne morietur? Sic qui sequuntur concupiscentias suas in mundo. Aut si quid egrotus sibi non videatur, Sed sanus, ac sic medicum respuat, tale est; per opera sua Iustificari et sanum esse.¹⁵

The comparison runs as follows. A sick man under the care of a physician is both ill and well--ill in that the sickness is still present, but well in that the physician considers him well because he knows that he will heal him and because he has already begun to heal him. Even so the sinner whom Christ has taken in hand is both sinful and righteous--

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 272, l. 3--273, l. 2.

sinful in that concupiscence is still a very real part of his being; righteous in that Christ considers him righteous, has begun to free him from sin, and has promised him complete freedom from sin in eternal life. But the sick man is well not only in the estimate of his physician; he is himself well insofar as he believes the physician's promise to heal him. The sinner is righteous not only in the estimate of Christ but also in respect to himself, insofar as he believes Christ's promise to liberate him from sin.

Walther's contention is that the clause "quia certus, quod sanabit eum, qui incepit eum sanare..." does not belong to the tertium comparationis, since Luther does not repeat it in the apodosis of the analogy. On the surface this argumentation seems to be correct, since it is axiomatic that all of the details of a simile or parable are not to be applied to the actual case at hand. Nevertheless the basis on which the physician and Christ can consider the man healed or righteous is an important element in the analogy. Just as the physician has made a beginning of the cure, so Christ has begun to heal. In addition it is impossible to avoid drawing a clear-cut conclusion from the words "Iustus ex reputatione et promissione Dei certa, quod liberet ab illo, donec perfecte sanet." If the sinner is righteous because of God's certain promise that He will free him from sin, then Luther would seem to be saying that Christ already considers the sinner righteous because he knows that He will heal him. Then it is legitimate to posit a causal relationship between

the clauses "auscepit in stabulum et incepit sanare..." and "non imputans peccatum i.e. concupiscentias ad mortem."

Holl insists that justification in this passage is to be considered as a deed of God; Walther says that Luther treats it as an experience of man. In my opinion, Luther is speaking from both points of view at the same time. The entire context indicates that Luther is discussing the condition of the justified sinner as he walks with Christ. Intrinsece he is sinful, but extrinsece he is righteous. This righteousness he has by faith, not by sight or feeling.

On the whole, then, Holl's interpretation of this passage appears to be the correct one. But we must keep in mind that only in this critical spot does Luther indicate the basis for God's imputatio. In all of the numerous occurrences of the concept of imputatio noted above it is a merciful act of God, the motivation or basis of which is not considered.

The second passage in dispute between Holl and Walther is WA VII, 109, 26 ff. It is taken from Luther's Assertio Omnium Articulorum of 1520, in which he defended the theses condemned in the papal bull more extensively than in his previous writing, Adversus Exécrabilem Antichristi Bullam. The first thesis which he defends is that it is heretical to regard the Sacraments of the New Law as working ex onere

operato.¹⁶ The second thesis reads: "In puero post baptismum negare remanens esse peccatum est Paulum et Christum simul conculcare."¹⁷ The passage in dispute stands near the end of the exposition of this thesis.

In order to prove that original sin is a vital factor in a believer's life after baptism, Luther quotes a number of passages from the Pauline epistles which encourage the Christians to war against the flesh and to walk in the spirit. These words would have been meaningless had sin not been a factor in the life of those Christians.¹⁸ This fact is confirmed by the confession of many saints that they had to war against sin in their members.¹⁹ The good Samaritan picked up the man who was half-dead not in order to heal him instantly but in order to cure him gradually. Does not this fact show that no one is suddenly freed from his sins but that his healing is a gradual process?²⁰ The fact that we pray "Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done" proves that we do not perform the will of God, that we are still in the kingdom of the devil, and that we pollute God's name.²¹

¹⁶WA, VII, 101, ll. 11-12.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 103, ll. 9-10.

¹⁸Ibid., ll. 11-36.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 105, ll. 10-33; p. 106, ll. 2-17, l. 20 ff.

²⁰Ibid., p. 107, ll. 1-4.

²¹Ibid., p. 107, l. 29--108, l. 3.

Even though the opponents maintain that these phenomena in the lives of Christians are only a defectum, the Scripture actually views them as sin involving not only poena but also culpa.²² The opponents say that if all sins are forgiven in baptism, that which remains ought not be called sin. Luther answers in the words of Augustine against the Pelagians:

"Peccatum istud reatu transit, actu manet."²³ Thereupon follow the words in dispute:

Haec ipsa enim gratia novi testamenti et misericordia dei est, quod, quia geniti sumus verbo veritatis et renati baptismate, ut simus initium aliquod creaturae eius, interim favor dei nos suscipit et sustinet, non imputans ad mortem quod reliquum est peccati in nobis, licet vere peccatum sit et imputari possit, donec efficiamur perfecte nova creatura: ad finem enim purificationis patris misericordia respicit, propter quem intermedias peccati immunditias statuit misericorditer ignoscere, donec penitus aboleantur. Hoc Apostolus R. viii. sic dicit: 'Nihil ergo damnationis est in iis qui sunt in Christo Iesu, qui non secundum carnem ambulant.' Non ait 'Nihil peccati in eis est,' cum praecedente cap. peccatum asseruisset, sed 'nihil damnationis,' quia, etsi sit peccatum in eis, non nocet, duplici iure, Primo, quia sunt per fidem in Christo Iesu, quo mediatore eis ignoscitur quicquid peccati inest, Secundo, quia non secundum carnem ambulant, id est, pugnant contra peccatum ut extinguant, quo studio, quia inviti habent peccatum in se, pro non habentibus deus illos habet, non tamen nisi gratuita misericordia, ne superbiat quisquam in oculis dei de munditia sua, sed in humilitate suae miseriae servetur. Hoc sensu I. Iohan. v. dicit: 'Scimus, quoniam omnis qui natus est ex deo non peccat, sed generatio dei conservat et malignus non tanget eum.' At omnis qui credit, quoniam Iesus est Christus, ex deo natus est, ut ibidem dicit. Ita simul verum est, iustum non peccare, et tamen peccatum habere

²²Ibid., ll. 3-33.

²³Ibid., p. 109, ll. 6-10.

seu malum facere.²⁴

Two motifs are intertwined in the first six lines.

First, it is the gratia of the New Testament and the miseri-
cordia and favor of God that He receives and upholds the bap-
tized believers and does not impute to them the sin which re-
mains a part of their nature. Secondly, this gratia and mi-
sericordia are called forth because the believers have been
reborn by the Word and in baptism.

The clause "ad finem enim...aboleantur" presents another
double set of motifs: 1) the Father forgives because of the
goal of the believer's perfection toward which He looks; 2)
yet this is a merciful looking and forgiving.

The passage from Romans 8 shows that even though the be-
lievers are sinful, this sin cannot harm them, and this for
two reasons: because by faith they are in Christ Jesus, by
whose mediation their sin is forgiven; and because they do
not walk according to the flesh and so fight against sin.
God does not impute their sin to them because they do not wil-
lingly assent to sin; yet God's forgiveness arises only out
of His free mercy, lest anyone should boast of his purity in
the presence of God. Thus the Christian is, according to
Luther's formulation in his lecture on Romans, simul iustus
et peccator.

It is clear that in these three sections of the passage
the intertwined double motif precludes any attempt to state

²⁴Ibid., p. 109, l. 24--110, l. 4.

one factor without stating the other. Thus both Walther and Holl are one-sided and therefore incorrect in thier interpretations of these words. God continues to forgive the justified Christian both because of His mercy and grace in Christ Jesus and because the believers already have experienced the beginning of righteousness in this life and are on their way to the perfect goal. Justification again is viewed both from the viewpoint of God and man. Thus the passage by no means gives Holl the right to make his unqualified assertion that Luther after 1515-1516 taught an analytic verdict of justification on God's part, nor does it give Walther the opportunity to substantiate his viewpoint.

The third passage treated from opposite points of view by Holl and Walther consists in Theses 63, 64, and 65 of Luther's disputation De Lege²⁵ of 1535. Holl quotes these theses to prove that even the later Luther had never retracted his teaching of God's analytic verdict of justification:

- 63. At per debitum fieri nemo iustificabitur aut salvabitur, sed per factum esse, seu factores legis salvandi sunt omnes.
- 64. Non enim qui dicet: Domine, Domine, intrabit regnum coelorum, sed qui fecerit voluntatem patris, hic intrabit etc.
- 65. Deus enim serio vult legem suam impleri, usque ad minimum apicem et iota, aut nullum omnino salvari.

Taken out of their context, these theses would seem to support Holl's view that God's instantaneous judgement of justification--which for time-bound man extends from the

²⁵Paul Drews, Disputationen Dr. Martin Luthers (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), pp. 16-7.

moment he became a Christian through the daily renewed forgiveness to God's final judgement on the last day--is posited upon the ethical perfection which He will effect in them. The whole tenor of this disputation, however, would negate this interpretation. The superscription for this and the preceding disputation²⁶ is: "Arbitramur hominem iustificari fide absque operibus legis." In theses 4 to 34²⁷ Luther proves that St. Paul is speaking of the moral and not the ceremonial law. The law manifests sin; it slays.²⁸ The law leads either to presumption or despair.²⁹ The protagonists of work-righteousness are asked to produce a single example of the law being perfectly fulfilled.³⁰

All the saints and the entire Church must confess: "Si dixerimus, nos non habere peccatum, veritas Dei in nobis non est."³¹ The very fact that the entire Church prays the Lord's Prayer is its confession of sin.³² Therefore none of the saints are justified by the works of the law, much less by their own deeds.³³ But God truly desires His law to be ful-

²⁶Ibid., pp. 9-13.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 13-5.

²⁸Ibid., p. 15, Thesis 36.

²⁹Ibid., Theses 37-44.

³⁰Ibid., p. 16, Theses 50-1.

³¹Ibid., Thesis 57.

³²Ibid., Thesis 59.

³³Ibid., Thesis 60.

filled, and only he who does the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven.³⁴ A syllogism is then drawn: Whoever wants to enter life has to keep God's commandments. But none of the saints keep the commandments. Therefore none of the saints can enter life.³⁵ Since both major and minor premises are incontrovertible, "Quo nunc ibitur?"³⁶ But now we point to the one example of the perfect fulfillment of the law: The Mediator of God and men.³⁷ He was made obedient for us.³⁸ By His will we are all sanctified, and by His obedience many are accounted righteous, Romans 5.³⁹ Walther likewise points to the context of the three theses extracted by Holl and thus seems to gain the advantage over him.⁴⁰

It may be argued that the entire scope of this disputation nevertheless supports Holl's view. If we are accounted righteous and become righteous through Christ, then we become doers of the law, and as such we enter the kingdom of heaven. Thus God's ultimate standard is the law, and we arrive at a nomistic conception of God. To this I shall reply at the

³⁴ V. supra, Theses 63-65.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 17, Theses 67-69.

³⁶ Ibid., Theses 70-73.

³⁷ Ibid., Thesis 74.

³⁸ Ibid., Thesis 76.

³⁹ Ibid., Thesis 79.

⁴⁰ Cf. Chap. 3, p. 63. Walther, "Noch ein Wort zu Luthers Rechtfertigungslehre," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XXXIV (November, 1923), 670-1.

conclusion of the investigation of the following passage.

In his reply to Walther, Holl had quoted a short passage from Luther's large commentary on Galatians of 1531-1532.⁴¹ Walther showed rather conclusively that Holl was mistaken as to the identity of the editor of Luther's lectures on Galatians and therefore had arbitrarily changed the text. Since Holl did not reply to this point and since all the facts appear to be in Walther's favor, the reading "non autem dicitur factor ab operibus factis, sed ab operibus faciendis" will have to stand.

Luther pronounced these words while commenting on Galatians 3:10.⁴² Although it is true that as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse, it is also true that "Cursed is everyone that does not continue to do all things written in the book of the law." These two statements of Moses and Paul are contradictory. They can be understood only from the viewpoint of the articulus iustificationis.⁴³ From this point of view the following three sets of paradoxes are also intelligible: "Factores legis iustificabuntur" and "Qui operantur secundum Legem, damnatur." "Quidquid est extra fidem Abrahae, maledictum est," and "Iustificatio legis

⁴¹WA, XL, 1, 402, l. 8.

⁴²"For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written: 'Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them.'" The commentary on this verse begins on p. 391.

⁴³WA, XL, 1, 396, l. 26--397, l. 11.

debet in nobis impleri, Rom. 8." "Si Legem impleveris, non impleveris; si non impleveris, impleveris."⁴⁴ For everything depends on the meaning of facere.⁴⁵ To fulfill the law is not only an external matter but a thing of the spirit. There are two classes of factores: those who are factores of the works of the law against whom Paul battles in this epistle, and those who are factores ex fide. To be of the works of the law and to be of faith are as contradictory as the devil and God, sin and righteousness, death and life.⁴⁶

But the adversaries reply: "Factores legis iustificabuntur." This is correct.⁴⁷ The adversaries, however, believe that a factor legis is one who is justified ex praecedentibus operibus.⁴⁸ But this is contrary to Paul. This is to sin against the first three commandments. This is to deny Christ and all His benefits and to set up a merum figmentum et idolum legis.⁴⁹ Thus fulfilling the law the adversaries not only do not fulfill it but they deny the divine majesty in all its promises.⁵⁰ On the contrary, the law works wrath and increases sin: "Accusat, perterritificat et condemnat; quomodo

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 397, ll. 24-32.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 398, l. 18.

⁴⁶Ibid., ll. 18-23.

⁴⁷Ibid., ll. 33-34.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 399, ll. 15-16.

⁴⁹Ibid., ll. 16-26.

⁵⁰Ibid., ll. 26-28.

igitur iustificaret?"⁵¹ Therefore God seeing that no one could fulfill the law, promised the blessing in Abraham.⁵² And so facere is first of all to believe and therefore to keep the law through faith.⁵³ "Ergo clare et proprie definiendo 'facere' simpliciter est credere in Iesum Christum et accepto per fidem in Christum Spiritu sancto operari ea quae sunt in Lege."⁵⁴

Via this route Luther arrives at the passage under discussion. The Weimar Edition gives both the notebook transcription of Rörer and the copy which Rörer saw through print on the basis of his transcription. I shall quote according to the latter:

Sic nomen in toto mundo dabis, cui hic titulus: 'Factor Legis' conveniat extra promissionem Evangelii. Ideo Factor Legis est terminus fictus quem nemo intelligit, nisi sit extra et ultra legem in benedictione et fide Abrahae. Quare is verus est factor Legis qui accepto Spiritu sancto per fidem Christi incipit diligere Deum et benefacere proximo, Ut facere includat simul fidem, quae fides habet ipsum facientem et facit arborem, qua facta fiunt fructus. Oportet enim prius esse arborem, deinde fructus. Poma enim non faciunt arborem, sed facit opera. Itaque facere Legem absque fide est facere poma sine arbore ex ligno et luto, quod non est facere poma sed mera phantasmata. Posita autem arbore, hoc est persona seu factor qui fit per fidem in Christum, sequuntur opera. Oportet enim factorem esse ante facta, non facta ante factorem. Sic 'factor Legis iustificatur,' hoc est, reputatur

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 400, ll. 17-8.

⁵² Ibid., ll. 24-6.

⁵³ Ibid., l. 31.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 401, ll. 20-2.

iustus, Rom. 2. Non autem dicitur factor⁵⁵ ab operibus factis, sed ab operibus faciendis, Quia Christiani non fiunt iusti operando iusta, sed iam fide in Christum iustificati operantur iusta. Illud alterum politicum est, scilicet ex factis fieri factorem, ubi saepe citharisando, ut ait Aristoteles, fit aliquis citharodius. Sed in Theologia factor non fit ex operibus legis, sed oportet prius esse factorem, postea sequuntur facta.⁵⁶

Thus Luther says that only he who is under the Gospel can have the title of factor legis. This factor legis is the man who has received the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ and so begins to love God and do good to his neighbor. Faith produces works just as a tree produces fruit. It is just as impossible for works to be present without faith as fruit without a tree. Thus the doer of the law is justified, i.e., is accounted just, because of the works which he does having faith, not for works which took place before faith, since these are nonexistent. This may sound as if gaining faith in Christ were only a prelude to the performance of the good works which are made possible by faith in Christ, since God ultimately does require perfect fulfillment of the law as a prerequisite for justification.⁵⁷ Luther expressly rejects such an interpretation in the words: "Quia Christiani non fiunt iusti operando iusta, sed iam fide in Christum iustifi-

⁵⁵Rörer's notebook transcription here reads: "Non dicitur ab operibus factis sed ab operibus faciendis." For a discussion of this difference and its implications for the dispute between Walther and Holl, see Chap. III, pp. 64-5.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 401, l. 27--402, ll. 13-28. Printed copy.

⁵⁷Cr. supra, p. 80.

cati operantur iusta" and "Sed in Theologia factor non fit ex operibus legis, Sed oportet prius esse factorem, postea sequuntur facta."

The decisive element in this passage is the double meaning of iustificare for Luther. He says: "Sic 'factor Legis iustificatur,' hoc est, reputatur iustus, Rom. . ." But following this he equates fiunt iusti with iustificati in the sentences: "Quia Christiani non fiunt iusti operando iusta, sed iam fide in Christum iustificati operantur iusta." In other words, man becomes, is made righteous by faith in Christ not by offering his own good works. The man who has been made righteous by faith in Christ does righteous deeds, and thus he as a factor legis is justified, accounted just; that is, his righteous deeds produced by faith in Christ are recognized for what they are. Thus it is true that only those who do the Father's will, i.e., the truly righteous, enter the kingdom of heaven; but the purpose of faith in Christ is not to enable man himself to meet the Father's requirements; faith rather makes him righteous already. Therefore Karl Holl can find no substantiation for his view of God's analytic verdict of justification in this passage or in the theses from the disputations.

The result of this investigation is that Holl is correct in interpreting the passage from the lecture on Romans as he does; the passage from Assertio Omnium Articulorum goes beyond both Holl's and Walther's views: and Walther can find support for his interpretation in the latter two.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AS TO CENTRAL POINTS OF CONTROVERSY

At the end of Chapter III we saw how Holl summed up the central issues in controversy between him and Walther. It will prove useful to review these central issues, to note the bearing which our investigation of the critical Luther passages has upon them, and to consider critical estimates of the controversy by later theologians.

Holl believes that Luther teaches an analytic verdict of justification on the part of God. Justification is the act in which God draws man into fellowship with Himself without doing violence to His own holiness and moral principles. For in justifying man God pronounces him righteous and make him righteous. Although this righteousness begun in man will not be complete until the future life, the timeless God already sees the sinner perfected in holiness. Thus the holy and righteous God can forgive the sinner his sins because the sinner thereby actually becomes righteous. Walther objects: such an interpretation of Luther's teaching completely overlooks the fact that God justifies the sinner because of the suffering and death of Christ.

Holl, to be sure, recognized the emphasis which Luther lays upon the vicarious death of Christ. But for Holl this is subordinate to the Father's will to forgive; it does not form the final basis for God's justifying deed. In addition,

Holl faults Walther for presenting only one aspect of the significance of Christ for Luther. Christ also rises in the hearts of the believers and works the new life in them.

The predominant characteristic of God, as Holl sees it, is His absolute moral perfection. Therefore, in declaring men righteous, God purposes to lead him to the divine level of moral perfection. On the contrary, says Walther, God's purpose in justifying the sinner is to draw him into the divine fellowship; the moral renovation which is inseparably connected with the verdict of acquittal is the means to attain the goal of fellowship, not the goal itself.

The last great area of disagreement centers around Melancthon's teaching of justification. Holl roundly denounces Melancthon for caricaturing Luther's teaching. In Holl's estimate, Melancthon did not establish a vital connection between God's act of pardon and the new life which begins in the believer. Thus Melancthon is said to assert that the new nature which the Christian possesses is his own creation. God pronounces the sinner righteous; the justified sinner begins to lead a new life by his own powers; when he sees that he continues to sin, he turns to God's pardon again in order to gain comfort and assurance for his troubled conscience. In fact, Holl asserts that Melancthon treats faith as a human merit by virtue of which man receives God's forgiveness. Melancthon's teaching is viewed as basically anthropocentric in character. Walther admits that Luther as a rule did not distinguish conceptually between God's pardoning decree and

the bestowal of his power to live the new life. On the other hand, Melancthon did thus distinguish in order that troubled consciences might obtain complete assurance. Nevertheless, the difference between Luther and Melancthon in the article of justification is only one of terminology. In principle Melancthon's views--at least in the Lutheran symbols which he wrote--are identical with those of Luther. In the end, Walther resorts to the argument from silence. Since Luther never expressed disagreement with Melancthon's presentation of justification, no difference between them can have existed.

We have seen that Holl's view of justification as an analytic judgement of God seems to be substantiated by the principal passage which he cites from Luther's lecture on Romans of 1515-1516. On the other hand, the passages which Walther cites from Luther's later writings do not admit of such an interpretation. This fact may lead to the conclusion that there is a great gulf fixed between the "young Luther" and the "old Luther." More recent scholarship has sought to disprove this conclusion.¹ Scholars have shown that the "medicinal" justification represented in the chief passage in dispute between Holl and Walther is not Luther's sole emphasis in his lecture on Romans. Luther also says that God

¹Cf. Wilhelm Pauck, "The Historiography of the German Reformation during the Past Twenty Years," Church History (December, 1940), LX, 310-1.

justifies the sinner because He accounts Christ's righteousness to him.²

This fact raises the question of Luther's Christology as set forth by Holl. Concentrated efforts to investigate Luther's Christology during the past twenty-five years have shown that Holl's view is completely untenable.³ This research has shown that Luther's faith is entirely Christocentric in nature. Erich Seeberg sums up the attitude of modern scholarship by stating that Luther's theology appears to have evolved from an individual view of Christ.⁴ Thus recent scholarship upholds Walther in his insistence upon the propter Christum in Luther's writings.

In fact, the controversy between Walther and Holl

²Adolf Hamel, Der junge Luther und Augustin (Gütersloh: Verlag C. Bertelsmann, 1935), II, 90, n. 1, where Hamel quotes the scholia according to Pickers edition, p. 176, l. 11: "Vide nunc, quod supra dixi, quod simul sancti, dum sunt iusti, sunt peccatores; iusti, quia credunt in Christum cuius iustitia eos tegit et eis imputatur, peccatores autem, quia non implent legem, non sunt sine concupiscentia, sed sicut egrotantes sub cura medici, qui sunt re vera egroti, sed inchoative et in spe sani seu potius sanificati i. e. sanificantes. quibus nocentissima est sanitas presumptio, quia peius recidivant."

³Pauck, op. cit., pp. 330-4.

⁴Ibid., where Pauck lists the most important contributions of recent scholarship to Luther's Christology. Among them we might mention E. Vogelsang, Die Anfänge von Luthers Christologie nach der ersten Psalmenauslegung (Leipzig, 1929); E. Vogelsang, Der Angefochtene Christus bei Luther (Leipzig, 1932); Erich Seeberg, Luthers Theologie; Christus (Stuttgart, 1937). Cf. also Hamel, op. cit., p. 90, n. 2-3, where references to additional literature are given.

initiated a great debate, the repercussions of which are felt to the present day in the theological world.⁵ Karl Barth and his school have been particularly vocal in their denunciation of Holl's views because of their intense aversion to all Ritschlian moralism. All of the discussions which have been at my disposal have uniformly criticized Holl. The chief objection to Holl's reconstruction of Luther's teaching of justification seems to be that such a motivation as Holl posits for God's forgiveness destroys the paradoxical and "irrational" nature of God's will to seek and save the lost. Such love on God's part would cease to be true love: it would not be the love of Jesus, who ate with the publicans and sinners. Holl's view, it is said, is a rationalistic bit of speculation which finds no warrant in Scripture. It is a moralistic attempt along Kantian and Ritschlian lines to obscure the true nature of man's sinfulness. If the justified sinner follows this view of God's justification, he will have to look to his own moral accomplishments in order to obtain assurance of continued forgiveness. Finally, it has been said that with the passages used by Holl Luther encouraged Christians to weak faith; however, "they do not have basic

⁵Adolf Köberle, Rechtfertigung und Heiligung (Leipzig: Verlag von Dörffling & Franke, 1929), p. 81, n. 3, lists the most important literature up to that date.

doctrinal significance."⁶

According to these criticisms, then, God's essence does not consist in a moralistic type of perfection but in a love which directs itself against all sin but at the same time enters into fellowship with sinful men. To find an ethical motivation for this love which is so paradoxical and so offensive to all moralistic human righteousness is to humanize the true God according to superficial standards of goodness. The critics see Holl's reinterpretation as a typical humanistic reaction to the stumbling-block of the Cross. It is only obvious to state we must agree with this criticism.

The relationship between Luther's and Melanchthon's views of justification, as pin-pointed by the Holl-Walther controversy, is an area in which a great deal of further research is necessary. If Engolland is correct in his analysis of Melanchthon's theology,⁷ no difference existed in the doctrine of justification between Luther and Melanchthon during their entire careers as reformers. Yet Engolland has to admit that the "older" Melanchthon expresses the relationship between iustificatio and regeneratio with coniugere, comitari,

⁶ T. A. Kantonen, The Resurgence of the Gospel (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 51. For the remaining criticisms see Köberle, op. cit., pp. 81-3; Gustaf Aulén, Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c. 1948), pp. 293, 299-300; J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, c. 1945), pp. 232-3.

⁷ Cf. Chapter I, pp. 6-14, especially p. 13.

sequi, accedere, addi, primus--postea. Besides, nearly all of the modern writers on Melancthon's theology before Engelland insisted upon a hiatus between "justification" and "sanctification," at least in the older Melancthon. Even Walther restricts the agreement of Luther and Melancthon in justification to the Lutheran symbols. In view of these facts, Holl appears to be at least partially correct in protesting against Melancthon's later view of the relationship between forgiveness of sins and the new life. We must also keep in mind that Melancthon's synergism came to the fore after 1535. He taught that three factors--the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the human will--are necessary in conversion. Since the human will thus becomes a part of faith, Holl is also correct in stating that for Melancthon (he should have said "the older Melancthon") faith is a human merit. In this connection, we ought to note that Walther's argument from silence is completely invalid, since Luther did not at all protest against Melancthon's later expressions of synergism.

Thus we see that later research and discussion have thoroughly discredited Holl's conception of the analytic verdict of justification and have in large part supported Walther's attacks. But we ought to note the praiseworthy emphases which Holl sought to maintain in his reinterpretation of Luther. Holl's insistence upon justification as a deed of God is thoroughly in keeping with the theocentric position of the Bible. What Holl did not see is that theocentricity

and Christocentricity are identical and coterminous. Holl interpreted Luther correctly when he stressed God's sole instrumentality in working the new life in men and the continuity and intimate connection between God's word of pardon and his renewing action in the lives of men. We must always emphasize this fact: Luther consistently taught that God pronounces the sinner righteous in order to make him righteous and thus to equip him for the complete divine fellowship. At the same time, we must stress that the forensic verdict is completely "irrational" and does not find its basis in the renewal of life. This emphasis upon the continuity between the pardoning word and the renewing activity of God is especially important for Lutheranism in our day, since Lutherans in the orthodox tradition have often found before them a hiatus between "faith" and "good works" and have been unable to overcome it. Holl sees through Luther's eyes that Christ is "made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" and that the risen Christ lives and works in the believers. Finally, Holl has rendered Christendom a great service by fastening attention upon Luther's view of the justified sinner as totus peccator. Thus the justified sinner, totus iustus and totus peccator, must continually cling to the pardoning word of God, which brings about the new creation in Christ Jesus.

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